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Kent on Sunday

www.kentnews.co.uk November 6, 2016

East edition No 737

TRAVEL

Why do we get so little pothole payments?

Research reveals just a handful of claims for damage settled

ENTERTAINMENT

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Pothole peril leaves us shuddering all year now

ONCE upon a time it seemed like potholes were a bit like Christmas. They turned up once a year, lasted a bit longer than everyone felt comfortable with, but then left again, to leave our roads clear for the majority of the year.

Today, however, they seem to have morphed into a perennial peril - constantly lurking on our big and small highways alike.

Now, before the council gets all uppity, there is no denying that once spotted and reported, the worst offenders - those ones that make your bones shudder and leave you feeling convinced the entire wheel axle of your vehicle of choice is currently watching forlornly as you drive off without it - do appear to be fixed quite swiftly. Not, of course, that it makes you feel any better as you continue to shake from the impact.

But they do lurk almost literally around every corner. And if not

on the main thoroughfare, then on the verges which you are forced to take to when a huge HGV, completely unsuitable for the road, bears down on you and leaves you little time to do anything other than plunge into a pothole and curse the driver in a language suitable to his nationality.

And the only conclusion you can come to is that either the roads were not well made or suitably repaired, or simply that so many cars on our roads is having an impact on the very structure of our streets. We look at some of the issues inside today.

It is, of course, a very real sign of the decline of investment and public money our local authorities have had over the years, so a certain sympathy is necessary. But that extends only so far. After all, we're not paying any less into the roads fund pot, so we should, surely, expect a decent level of road quality, at all times of the year, and not just for Christmas.



Editor **Chris Britcher**

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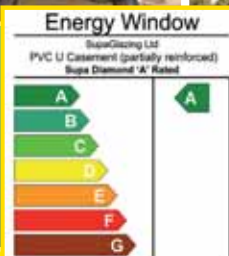
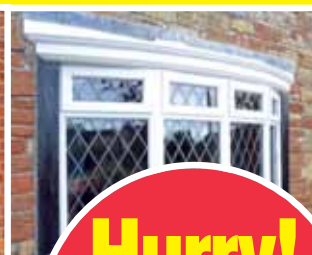
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Theatre hub plans edge closer despite opposition

By Tom Pyman

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CONTROVERSIAL proposals to develop a multi-million pound community hub on the site of an historic theatre in Southborough have been recommended for approval ahead of a crunch planning meeting next week.

Plans for the Southborough Hub, which would encompass a new theatre, library, cafe, retail units, medical centre, sports pavilion and offices are due to be considered by a Tunbridge Wells Borough Council committee on Wednesday.

It would sit on the site currently occupied by the Royal Victoria Hall theatre, built in 1900, which has been a key part of the community for generations.

It closed for the final time in 2015 following the final performance of a pantomime, despite opposition from drama groups. The local town council said at the time it was in need of at least £200,000 worth of structural repairs just to keep the doors open.

A report by council officers this week said: "It is concluded the harm resulting from the loss of this



PLANS: How the Southborough redevelopment would look

building would be outweighed by the public benefits, including the provision of a range of new community facilities, as well as new housing to meet identified needs."

Historic England refused to list the buildings stating that too many alterations had happened over time, leading to the loss of key architectural features.

The report adds: "The scale, layout and design of the hub

building and sports pavilion would respect the context of the site and preserve the visual amenities of the locality."

The Theatres Trust, the national advisory body which supports theatres, is supportive of the project

The 51-page report says 207 letters of objection had been received, although "many responses have been received from people living outside Southborough" and a petition against the

plans has also received more than 1,200 signatures.

Campaigners say: "We want new high quality designed community buildings that are fit for purpose and are centred around a refurbished Royal Victoria Hall.

"We want less of our playing fields lost to development, and less in-town traffic congestion, parking problems and pollution."

The council's report also mentions 30 letters of support.

MEP calls for Farage to ride to rescue after court's Brexit ruling

A SOUTH east MEP has branded the High Court's decision to consult parliament on Brexit as "a scandal" and insisted Nigel Farage take on the Ukip leadership once more to assist leaving the European Union.

In a ruling on Thursday morning, the court said the government cannot trigger Article 50 and set in motion the process of leaving the EU on its own.

That means the process of Brexit could be delayed for months and led to Westerham's Mr Farage claiming those who voted 'leave' could be "betrayed".

Janice Atkinson, who intended to stand for Ukip in Folkestone and Hythe, was booted out of the party following an expenses row, has now called on it to unite and reinstate Mr Farage, who lives in Westerham, as a permanent leader.

Speaking following Thursday's verdict, the independent MEP said: "This decision is a scandal and an affront to the British people, 17,410,742 of whom voted to leave

the European Union.

"Parliament itself gave the British people the right to vote on this momentous issue and their voice was clear; the UK must leave the EU. No ifs, no buts, no small print.

"To seek now to set parliament against the will of the people in this way is dangerous, unethical and risks a clash between citizens and government.

"Ukip now needs to get its act together again fast and ensure that Nigel Farage is back in the driving seat when, once again, the country needs his leadership to ensure our future as an independent nation state.

"That, and nothing less, is what the British people voted for on June 23."

Mr Farage quit as Ukip leader after the Brexit vote but found himself recalled to the post, in an interim capacity, after Diane James stepped down just days after being elected.

The government is appealing the High Court's decision, with a further hearing expected next month.

Police continue probe after two left injured in shooting

POLICE are continuing inquiries after a double shooting in a village near Ashford left two men needing to be airlifted to hospital.

One of the men injured following the incident in the Marten Park area of High Halden has been discharged from hospital and the other is expected to be discharged shortly.

Officers were called to the scene

just after 11am on Thursday and later arrested two people on suspicion of attempted murder.

During the incident, homeowners had been restricted from leaving and entering their homes.

Any witnesses to the incident are asked to call DC Tristan Kluibenschlager or Detective Sergeant Adam Marshall of Kent Police on 01622 654864.

Ferry spots asylum seeker's desperate kayak journey

AN asylum seeker - believed to be Iranian - had to be rescued after a ferry spotted him in the English Channel in a kayak.

It is believed he had been living in the so-called jungle camp in Calais which was demolished last week amid mounting security concerns.

It is understood Border Force and the Maritime and Coastguard

Agency responded to a report of the kayak being spotted by a ferry off the coast at around 12.30pm last Saturday.

A Border Force cutter was deployed and picked up the man some eight miles off the Kent coast.

He will be dealt with in line with immigration rules, the Home Office said. The man is believed to be around 30 years old.



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Union confirms more rail strikes for Christmas

COMMUTERS will face yet more strike action on Southern Rail, this time over the busy Christmas period.

Rail union the RMT has been in bitter talks with the firm, over the role of conductors on its services, which has already seen a number of walk-outs leave travellers stranded.

Southern operates services between Tonbridge and

Redhill and from Ashford to Eastbourne.

This week, the union said its members would stage further walk-outs between December 22-24, and again from New Year's Eve to January 2.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said: "We call on them to get round the negotiating table rather than jamming their heads in the sand."



CROSSING: Mocked in new song

War of words erupts as mayor quits amid 'race' claims after Brexit vote

By Simon Allin

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THE UK's first Nepalese mayor has resigned from Swanley Town Council and the Conservative Party after claiming he was isolated and sidelined because of his race.

Shanker Gaire was elected to the post in May but quit this week amid what he claims was an increasingly hostile atmosphere following the Brexit vote.

Cllr Gaire alleges he has been 'disrespected and disregarded' by council leader Victor Southern and town clerk Julie Pilbeam, who did not seek his approval or consult him on key issues.

But Cllr Southern has denied the allegations, rejecting accusations of racism and claiming there has been a misunderstanding of the mayor's ceremonial role.

Speaking at a full council meeting this week, Cllr Gaire said: "It has always been said that politics is a dirty game. However, I had not believed in it but now I stand corrected on this



ANGRY: Shanker Gaire

matter.

"Without mincing words, I would like to inform you that I may be a mayor in your eyes, but in the council, I have been disrespected and disregarded through words, action,

tone, attitude and body language by the two key people in the executive positions, namely the chief executive and/or the town clerk and the council leader.

"I am not consulted over matters and nor is my approval sought.

"I thought that Brexit had created a barrier mainly for Europeans but it seems that this spirit was extended beyond Europe and created a barrier for the only Nepalese elected as mayor in the history of the UK."

But Cllr Southern hit back saying: "That is absurd. No-one has done anything, overtly or covertly, to undermine his position and until two weeks ago we had a very friendly relationship.

"From the beginning there was a misunderstanding over the function of the mayor. He seemed to think he was chief executive, whereas by definition the mayor is not a member of the executive. We are the people who set the policies."

Cllr Gaire says he will continue to serve on the council as an independent councillor.

Parody track targets Xmas chart success

A PARODY song about the daily woes for commuters at the Dartford Crossing has hit more than a million views in less than a week and is looking to mount an assault on the Christmas charts.

The foul-mouthed track, titled Dartford Tolls and set to the tune of Jingle Bells, was posted by satirical Essex-based website, Southend News Network, with vocals by Annie Humphrey of local band, Frog On A Rocket.

Since its release in late October, the video has received more than 1.1 million views on SNN's Facebook page, in addition to over 10,000 on YouTube.

The anonymous 'chief reporter' of SNN told us: "The festive season was the inspiration, and the fact that so many people in Kent and Essex will spend a huge chunk of it stuck at the crossing.

"Reaching a million views in four days was crazier than anything that we could have planned as Southend News Network's previous record is under 400,000.

"Myself and Annie will be filming a video this weekend, and it is going to be very special."

The track will officially be able to download and stream from December 2, with all proceeds split evenly between the British Heart Foundation and Shelter charities.

Burnt MP's warning over Bonfire Night

A MP who suffered 30 per cent burns to his body when lighting a fire with petrol is urging the public not to follow his "stupid" mistake this Bonfire Night.

Gordon Henderson, Conservative MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey, is raising awareness after his accident earlier this summer which resulted in him being airlifted the air ambulance and spending 10 days at the specialist burns unit at East Grinstead.

Mr Henderson has since made a good recovery and visited the Kent air ambulance's Marden base last week, four months on from his accident.

He met paramedic, Caroline Rose and pilot, Captain Kevin Goddard who attended to Mr Henderson on that day.

The MP said: "To anybody out there who is in the habit of using petrol to start a bonfire, or is tempted to do so in the future, I would urge you to resist such temptation.

"Never use petrol on bonfires."

Venus observation trip to Hawaii online

RARE documents from a British astronomy expedition in 1874 to observe the transit of the planet Venus are available online for the first time, thanks to a digitisation project led by the University of Kent.

The university's Dr Rebekah Higgit, of its school of history, worked with the Cambridge Digital Library on the project, which was partly funded by the British Society for the History of Science. The project involved digitising material from the archive of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, and a private collection.

Dr Higgit focused on the British expeditions organised to observe the 1874 transit of Venus, particularly one made to the Sandwich Islands in Hawaii.

The collection includes photographs of the observing instruments, huts and sites; details of the equipment and provisions taken overseas; official and private journals and a unique set of caricature drawings that follow the life and adventures of the Hawaiian observers.

The archive is available free to researchers and the public.

Pupils set to return after blaze at school

STAFF at a school on Grain which was damaged by a major fire last weekend says it should be ready to welcome back pupils when its new term starts tomorrow (Monday).

Emergency crews were called to a "significant sized fire" in the early hours of last Sunday morning at St James' Primary on the High Street.

A statement by the school said: "The Rochester Diocesan Board of Education and The Williamson Trust (the two sponsors of the academy) are working closely with the governing body on putting in place contingency measures for the start of next term which begins on November 7."

Mrs Sivarajah, the head of school at St James': "The main priority of our plans will focus on providing continuity in the education for all the pupils at the school in order to ensure that any disruption to teaching and learning is kept to a minimum whilst the school building is rebuilt and refurbished."

An investigation into the cause of the blaze was started on Sunday morning.

Father's fury as Noye could walk free in just six months

By Tom Pyman

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THE father of M25 road rage victim Stephen Cameron says he feels "betrayed" after it was revealed his killer could be allowed to walk free in just six months.

Kenneth Noye, who was born in Bexleyheath and lived in West Kingsdown, is currently serving a life sentence for stabbing to death electrician Mr Cameron, 21, from Dartford, in an attack on the Swanley slip road of the motorway in 1996.

It is one of the most notorious cases in recent Kent criminal history.

He was recommended for release a year ago but then-justice secretary Michael Gove blocked the move, much to the relief of the victim's family.

Now though, father Ken Cameron says he has been told the parole board will start to review Noye's case in January.

He told The Sun: "I feel betrayed, totally let down. Stephen never got a chance at life. Noye should remain behind bars for the rest of his."

"All we wanted do was get on with our lives but this is a constant worry for me and my family."

"We have never wanted revenge, we only wanted justice and life should mean life."

His wife, Toni, died in April aged 73, and



KILLER: Kenneth Noye fled and hid in Spain following the killing of Stephen Cameron

Mr Cameron said she "would be spitting bullets now" as "she wanted [Noye] to die in prison".

Two years before killing Mr Cameron, Noye had been released from prison for handling bullion stolen in the Brink's-Mat robbery.

He stabbed to death police officer John Fordham in January 1985 in the grounds of his Kent home, but was acquitted at trial after claiming he was acting in self-defence.

A spokesperson for the parole board said: "We can confirm that the Ministry of Justice

has referred the case of Mr Kenneth Noye for his next parole review.

"As with all cases referred to the parole board the case will undergo a paper review in the first instance.

"The review may be concluded at that stage, or may be directed to an oral hearing. Parole reviews are currently taking between six to 12 months to conclude, if they require an oral hearing.

"The parole board is unable to comment on the specifics of individual cases."

Tory MP elected to Brexit committee

SOUTH Thanet MP Craig Mackinlay has been elected to a newly-created government committee on Brexit.

The Conservative, who beat Nigel Farage for the seat last year, will join Michael Gove and Hilary Benn on the exiting the EU select committee. He was elected by his fellow Tory MPs.

Mr Mackinlay told KoS it was "pinnacle" of his career.

Blank cigarette boxes have hit the county

THE first batch of cigarettes in plain packaging have arrived in Kent with packs spotted this week in Tunbridge Wells.

It is part of an on-going series of campaigns to further erode the number of smokers. Use of plain packaging in other countries saw a dramatic cut in the number of youngsters taking up the habit.

Tearooms up for sale

POPULAR Romney Marsh attraction the Lathe Barn in Burmarsh is to be sold, with a guide price of £900,000, after its owners decided to head into semi-retirement after running it for the last 16 years.

Diana and Denis Wimble have owned the tea rooms, shop and offices which pull in around 27,000 visitors each year.

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Mum's fury as Mothercare stops her breastfeeding son

MOTHERCARE has been forced to apologise after a 29-year-old mother was told she was not allowed to breast feed her poorly three-month-old son in its Bluewater store.

Zoe Frangou, 29, took to social media after complaining to the store and not hearing back for seven weeks.

She explained how she had sat down in a quiet part of the store to discreetly feed him when staff told her to stop - a decision she said was "completely unacceptable".

She said: "I was shocked and upset by what had happened. The staff member went out of her way to confront me and to tell me that I can't breastfeed. I am disgusted at how I was treated and that the welfare of me and baby were not considered."



A Mothercare spokesperson said: "We would like to sincerely apologise to Mrs Frangou for the disappointing way she was treated. We provide all our stores with our breastfeeding policy which clearly

states our full support for all nursing mothers.

"We are fully investigating this incident and will be making sure all our teams are aware of our breastfeeding policy."

Goodwin Sands petition delivered to Number 10

A PETITION to prevent the dredging of Goodwin Sands was handed in to 10 Downing Street this week.

The 11,500 signatures are asking the government to stop plans by Dover Harbour Board to dredge 2.5 million cubic metres of sand and gravel from the famous sandbanks, which lie six miles off the coast of Deal, to regenerate the seafront's Western Dock.

The Save Our Sands campaign organisation have stated the dredging, which will occur over a three-year period, could disturb the maritime graves of mariners and pilots from the Battle of Britain.

They also say the sand is a rare ecosystem for protected marine wildlife, and that Dover Harbour Board's surveyor's

report states that it could take until 2030 for this habitat to recover.

Esme Chilton, from SoS, previously told KoS: "More and more people are taking notice of the campaign, and they're horrified by Dover Harbour Board's unscrupulous intention to dredge these precious tidal sandbanks. The volume they want take is equivalent to the Great Pyramid of Giza."

Dover harbour chiefs want to create 600 jobs using sand to help relocate the seafront's cargo area to a new terminal at the Western Docks.

The sand will be used for both land reclamation and construction works.

The port has claimed it will take just 0.22 per cent of the total sand volume.

Choral show for Somme

A CHORAL piece penned by Pulitzer Prize winning composer David Lang will be performed by the University of Kent's Celilian Choir to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme on Thursday. It takes place at 1.10pm at its Canterbury campus.

Minnis Bay diner shuts

THE Minnis Bay bar and restaurant in Birchington has closed for three months for a major refurbishment.

The popular seaside venue, owned by Shepherd Neame, is set to be back in business, after expanding its bar and restaurant, in February next year.

Hospital charity single

THE Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust choir is teaming up with singer Shane Hampshire to produce a charity single for Christmas.

By Your Side, will be released with money raised through sales going towards the hospital.

Celebrating Marlowe

THE University of Kent is marking the identification of Canterbury-born playwright Christopher Marlowe as co-author of Shakespeare's three Henry VI plays with a two-day conference on November 9-10.

A free lecture takes place at 6pm on Wednesday night - contact uni for details.

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- Trip to Atlantic Shopping village on Sunday
- Refreshments/music to dance to on Sunday afternoon
- Last night 'Party Night' with optional fancy dress

Top Three Stories



1. Discount store expands

Niftie's is moving across the county

2. More PCSOs on streets

Commissioner hails frontline presence

3. Taxi ploughs into salon

Damage to shop is being reviewed

The Essential Guide:



...to Dreamland

Everything you need to know about the historic amusement park in Margate



FEATURED PHOTO GALLERY: Benenden residents welcomed HRH Countess of Wessex to their community-run shop and cafe this week. See pages 20 and 21 for the full story.

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Top Three Blogs



1. Stop texting and driving

Stamping out using a phone at the wheel

2. A nation of quitters?

Criticising Zac Goldsmith's resignation

3. Variable speed limits

Greater clarity needed on motorways

Results of the KoS Online Poll

Who will be the next US president?

- 1 Donald Trump - 29%
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Apprentice star fired as 'nice guys don't win'

We caught up with JD O'Brien this week after millions tuned in to watch him get kicked out of top BBC TV show

By Adele Couchman

adele.couchman@archant.co.uk

SEVENOAKS beachwear manufacturer JD O'Brien has revealed to KoS the highs and lows of hit BBC TV show The Apprentice after he heard the dreaded 'you're fired' from Lord Sugar on Thursday night's show.

Mr O'Brien - the JD stands for James Damien - was appointed project manager for this week's gruelling task of helping two entrepreneurs launch their new cycling products through crowd funding. But the Kent businessman failed to impress when he took the blame for his losing team.

"I do feel if I fought harder I could have stayed," explained the 38-year-old.

"Nice guys don't win The Apprentice. Too often people will walk all over others to get where they want to be, but I wasn't willing to sacrifice my dignity and integrity to get ahead.

"I've been walked over so many times in business, and I didn't want to be like that on the show.

"Ultimately I went in there to get the £250,000 and benefit my business. But it is a brutal process once

you get on the show - whoever wins truly deserves it."

The show has a £250,000 prize pot for the winner in the form of an investment in a business proposal put forward by the candidates who, each week, undergo a series of tasks to see who can perform the best.

One contestant is fired each week in the 'boardroom' as Lord Sugar - best known for the Amstrad brand - decides who should be kicked out of the process.

Mr O'Brien came a cropper after failing to show sufficient leadership as his team raised the least money and paid the ultimate price.

Mr O'Brien, who is known for his distinct gravelly voice, lives in Seal with his wife Polly, 36, and their two children - three-year-old Elodie and two-year-old Blaise.

A self-confessed family man, he admitted the show - which involves 18 candidates living together in a leafy Hampstead mansion during the filming - made him miss home.

"It was brutal being away from my family," he said.

"Being away from my wife and two small kids made me a little more reserved, and I did lose the fire in my belly I had at the beginning of the process."

He added: "If you're young and single, about 25 or 26 it's fine. But when



THREAT: Mr O'Brien, centre, waits to hear his fate between fellow contestants on Thursday night's show

you're married with a couple of kids you suddenly feel a bit more vulnerable."

Speaking of the previous week's department store task Mr O'Brien admitted that with so many characters flying around he found it hard to find a place.

"I didn't do anything in the personal shopping episode, but you have to take it with a pinch of salt. Dillon [fellow contestant, Dillon St Paul] was running the sub team, and there were three of us in there - I think I would have done the task better on my own.

"In the early days it's difficult to show your true character as there are so many egos floating around, shouting and screaming. Some people come out all guns blazing, but I'm the type of person to back off and only give my opinion when needed.

"In the first few weeks, there were people clashing heads and I wanted to step back and be more thoughtful."

In his audition tape, Mr O'Brien describes himself as "fun, outgoing, passionate, driven, ambitious and ready to go".

Asked which historical figure he would compare himself to, he picked Scottish knight William Wallace, claiming he was "hard as nails, passionate and men followed him".

But under the pressure of the cameras, the businessman admits to watching the show from "behind a pillow" at home.

"There's so many times when I think, 'Why have they done that?'."

"But only when you go on there do you realise how tough it is. There are moments when we are asked to do stuff like come up with an advertising campaign for a pair of jeans in two days - who does that? We are trying to achieve the impossible."

Speaking of facing Lord Sugar alongside his advisors Karren Brady and Claude Littner in the boardroom, he said: "They are impressive people; they walk into the room and own it. They know what they are doing and what they are talking about, so it's tough when Lord Sugar gives you a look like you're a complete wally and Karren gives you the stink eye."

Yet despite his sudden departure in the fifth week, Mr O'Brien said he will be taking the experience as a positive one.

"When you are suddenly living with 17 other people, waking up at 3am and running around London trying to compete for £250,000 - it's hard to be yourself.

"But by putting yourself on that position on a reality TV show you need to try not to take it overly serious and have a bit of a laugh."

The former broker, who runs a beachwear company called Munkle, only moved to Kent in September after living in big cities throughout most of his life.

"I was driving through the country one day and thought Kent was absolutely amazing and I immediately fell in love with the place.

"We made the move because of the connections and the commute and I didn't want to be in London with the kids. I've always liked the idea of greenery, and the kids being able to run around.

"In the capital there are so many people, and in somewhere like Kent you can build a life here and make a name for yourself."

Originally from Shropshire, Mr O'Brien moved to London as a child. He left school to become a personal trainer, but find himself struggling to find the investment to open his own gym.

"I was getting a bit lost, and then one day I was sitting next to a guy at a wedding who said 'if you ever need a job just give me a ring'.

"A few weeks later I had an interview and moved to Singapore."

It was during his time moving around Asia as a City broker he met his wife Polly, who now works in London as a lawyer. After having their two children, the pair decided to move back to the UK and Mr O'Brien opened his own business.

And with his beachwear company aimed at the expat market in Singapore and Dubai, the fired contestant said he decided to apply for the show in order to secure a cash injection and market his products overseas.

"My focus now is making my business more successful and pushing it out to less freezing climate zones like the UK.

"These past few weeks have been a rollercoaster, but now I'm settling down to see what I can do as both a businessman and a family man."

He added: "Although I would have liked to stay to the end, I feel like I've done my best. And you never know what will come from things like this."

And most importantly - who does he think will win?

"When you are in there and see people develop week by week, you honestly can't predict who will be the last person standing.

"But in terms of who I would like to win - I would say Alana. She's a real sweetheart and we helped each other out a lot."

Now in its 12th year, the highly successful BBC reality show regularly pulls in more than six million viewers.

Previous contestants include Katie Hopkins and Loose Women panellist Saira Khan.



MISTAKES: His role as project leader left him floundering this week

Claims for pothole pain rocket but only 10% get any payout

Chris Murphy takes a look at figures which reveal why more often than not drivers are getting no compensation

KENT County Council fields one of the highest number of claims for damage caused by potholes, a survey has found - but just 10 per cent receive any payout.

The RAC Foundation checks the totals for all of the councils in the UK, and found Kent sits at number four in the charts for the sheer number of claims put in.

It says Kent County Council was hit with 1,120 claims but paid out on just 112 of them with an outlay of £30,948 - that's just under £280 each.

By comparison, Hampshire is at the top of the table with 1,952 claims. That county council paid out on 306 of them for a total of £103,480; an average of just under £340 each.

Terry Hudson, the Kent representative for the Alliance of British Drivers, was dismayed at the findings.

He told us: "We in Kent do not seem to fare very well with only 10 per cent of compensation claims being successful, out of a total 1,120 requested.

"If you claimed in Northumberland, there was a 70 per cent chance of being successful.

"One could argue that Kent is much more densely populated and therefore roads carry much more traffic, so encouraging more claims. But then northern counties have much more harsh weather, which is often used as excuse for road damage.

"But this still does not reflect the discrepancy of actual pay-outs.

"While generally potholes numbers have been reduced over the last few years, once off the more main roads we are still left with a crumbling road system.

"Many, now very busy roads, are too narrow and hence nearside edges have become dangerous as they crumble away and what can be a nasty jolt in a car, can become quite dangerous if on two wheels.

"Another problem is that a damaged tyre or faulty suspension may not be immediately obvious and may only appear weeks or months later

"A damaged tyre or faulty suspension may be not immediately obvious and may only appear weeks or months later and so is too late to be claimed for, even if you could."

Terry Hudson,
Alliance of British Drivers

and so is too late to be claimed for, even if you could pin-point the actual rut or pothole.

"If we add the amount of direct taxation paid by drivers, it equates to around £50 billion per year, but only about 10 per cent is reinvested back into the road infrastructure.

"While political parties support grandiose schemes like HS2, which will cost a minimum of £50 billion, would this huge investment be better spent on maintaining roads, most people use every day of their lives?"

Overall in the UK during the past 12 months, drivers made at least 31,483 claims against councils for vehicle damage caused by poor road conditions. Astonishingly, this is a claim submitted every 17 minutes.

But there is a huge gap between the number of claims and payouts, suggesting motorists are 'trying it on' or councils are strict about the conditions that need satisfying before a cheque is signed.

Overall, authorities settled 26.9 per cent of cases in favour of the driver - the rest were thrown out.

The analysis by the RAC Foundation is based on data collected from 204 out of the 207 local authorities in the UK.

Even when there was a payout, councils didn't always pay the full amount claimed.



DAMAGE: Holes in our roads are now a problem all year round as our roads crumble. And with rain and cold weather expected this winter it is set to get worse once again despite efforts by the council to fix them

The average value of a claim was £432, though the average value of a successful claim was lower at £306.

Between Hampshire and Kent, the second highest number of claims made against it was Surrey at 1,412, and Hertfordshire on 1,369.

All councils in the UK had claims, except the Isles of Scilly.

And Orkney Council along with the City of London, had only one each.

The weather has taken its toll on the roads in recent years. The total number of claims received in 2015/16 by councils across Great Britain is 31,483, which is around nine per cent higher than the previous year.

A Kent County Council spokesman said: "We are one of the largest local authorities in England, with over 5,000 miles of road network, which in part explains Kent's position in terms of the number of claims lodged, in the RAC Foundation research.

"It is significant, though, that the figures show we had one of lowest 'successful' claim figures in the country - reflecting a low level of liability because of our improved fault reporting and repairs brought in over the past few years.

"We work hard to maintain our

roads to help prevent problems and potholes in the future.

"Resurfacing roads is an essential part to maintaining our 5,400 mile road network for longer and we schedule in planned work, where necessary, each year, usually during warmer months.

"We select the right method at the right time to get best value for money.

"Our resurfacing programme is published on Kent.gov and our programme is based on road condition data.

"This includes regular inspections, annual surveys using specialist equipment, and reports from councillors, parish councils, community groups and residents.

"Our inspectors regularly check for defects but we encourage people to help us identify any problems and report them.

"Our recent pothole blitz has so far seen more than 1,300 potholes permanently repaired together with over 55,000m-sq of larger road repairs across the county, and over 12,000 repairs undertaken as part of our day to day routine highway maintenance.

"The council is spending an extra £3 million on pothole repairs this

year. Additional repairs have been undertaken by local companies and the workforce empowered to address any potholes in a street they are working in if a repair is required, this has proven to be very successful and provide a complete job from our customer perspective."

Still, the RAC Foundation found there is a general backlog of maintenance. Using the government's own assessment, they found some £8.6bn still needs to be spent.

Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation, said: "These figures are symptomatic of the inadequate funding available for local road maintenance.

"Year in, year out, the backlog of work on local roads is estimated to run to several billion pounds.

"A pitted road surface isn't just a problem for motorists - for those on two wheels it can be life threatening.

"Just last week the chancellor acknowledged that there had been decades of underfunding in the nation's infrastructure and that he was keen to support targeted, value-for-money public investment. Providing the funds to fix our roads would be a great place to start and would show rapid results."



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Keeping flame of French love alive despite a Brexit future

We take a trip to Westminster to sit down with a man whose constituency is on the frontline of the migration debate - Dover and Deal Tory MP Charlie Elphicke. He talks France, Theresa May and regeneration of the towns he represents

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

WITH family living in the county and its surrounding areas for more than half a millennium, it's fair to say Charlie Elphicke's roots are firmly planted in Kent.

Unashamedly ambitious, yet passionate about big issues affecting the Garden of England, the Conservative MP for Dover and Deal is perfectly warm and welcoming as we sit down on a breezy morning in Westminster.

The ground floor of Portcullis House is buzzing with busy researchers and other parliamentary staff coming and going, with an energy not dissimilar to that which Mr Elphicke has for the county he is proud to call home.

"I'd spend all week in Dover if I could," he admits, "but there's a job to be done in London - I have to come up to parliament to speak up for the concerns of the people of Dover and Deal."

Following a commute at "the crack of dawn" from his home in St Margaret's Bay to the Houses of Parliament every Monday morning, a typical week begins with a series of conventions where he looks to ask questions, be that to members of the Home Office or, of course, on a Wednesday lunchtime, the prime minister herself, who recently described him as "a passionate advocate for the support for his local area".

On the day of our meeting he also helped local campaigners deliver a petition to Downing Street opposing dredging of the Goodwin Sands and met with the founders of Fair Fuel UK - a Cranbrook-based pressure group aiming to deliver a better deal for drivers at the pumps.

Mr Elphicke says he remains in parliament until 10.30pm most Mondays, with similarly late finishes each evening until he leaves at 6pm on a Thursday to drive home to his wife of twenty years and two children, aged 16 and nine.

"Friday, I'm in the constituency, going around meeting groups, whether it's the chief of police, church groups or a school," he said.

"It's always very busy, there's no end to it, but that's what I love about it."

"I'm in the high street every couple of weeks - I hold a street stall, chat to people, talk about their concerns, what things they want me to take up."

When away from work and "all the pressures of modern family life", the 45-year-old plays the flute and enjoys kayaking.

"That's my favourite pastime," he said.

"I've been into it for years, it's just wonderful, and I used to do sailing as well."

"I do it about every other week when the sea is calmer, you can't do it when it's too choppy." Despite being born in Cambridgeshire and educated in Essex, Mr Elphicke makes no secret of his personal affinity with the county and a sense of duty to serve the public, which he traces back generations.

"A couple of hundred years ago my ancestors were mayors of Tenterden," he said.

"There's a long history in my family of public service and it's something I'm incredibly proud of."

"I was always going to end up back in Kent because that's where the family have always





FUTURE: The Conservative MP is confident Deal will keep growing thanks to better rail links, while Dover has ambitious plans to breathe new life into the town, as pictures right, illustrate

been from.

"I'm fascinated by how we can improve people's lives and this came home to me when I was living in Lambeth in south London.

"The council was completely corrupt and this massive corruption was affecting the lives of the

people who were most vulnerable.

"Corruption in government doesn't hurt the well-off, it hurts the least well-off.

"It made me really cross and I wanted to do something about it, so I stood against the Labour leader of Lambeth council.

"It lost control in 1994 and the following year I became chairman of the finance committee so had to turn it around - make sure people paid council tax, reduce corruption, make sure people get the services they need, and that's when I realised how much of a difference you can make

in politics."

A former government whip, he was last week elected to the Commons' Public Accounts Committee to become "the guardian of use of tax-

Continued on page 16



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payers' cash".

His support for Theresa May has been notable, and despite voting to Remain in the European Union on June 23, he has been a prominent banger of the Brexit drum ever since the result was announced, and appears to be a growing ally of Number 10's current occupant.

Asked if he was perhaps putting the feelers out for a more senior role, to follow in the footsteps of fellow Kent MPs Damian Green, Greg Clark and Sir Michael Fallon appointed to the prime minister's cabinet earlier this year, he remained coy.

"I am ambitious - ambitious for Britain and the country we can build," he said.

"The agenda the prime minister has set out of making a Britain that works for everyone, that's the sort of politics I believe in so much.

"Obviously I want to contribute to the future of the country and that's what I'm doing in setting out all manner of ideas.

"I'm on public accounts because tax payers' money is really important - we've worked so hard to earn it, we need to make sure it's spent properly and that the government doesn't waste it."

His Dover constituency is somewhat notorious for being somewhere holidaymakers travel through, rather than to, and it's a perception that frustrates its MP.

Mr Elphicke believes a number of multi-million pound projects, which recently went on display at a UK-wide property marketplace in a bid to champion Dover as a post-Brexit hub for investors, will help regenerate the town.

"I'm so passionate about Dover and Deal being a destination in their own right," he said.

"Deal is a town massively on the rise, we've seen it become the high street of the year, the fast train is transforming the town and it's fantastic to see so much energy and how vibrant Deal is.

"We battled for years to get rid of Burlington House [a 12-storey office block] which was a monstrous carbuncle infecting the landscape.



GROWTH: Big plans for Dover's port will underpin its success going forward

"When that was knocked down it fired the starting gun on the renewal of Dover.

"Now we're taking forward the St James development [which includes a six-screen cinema, 108-bed hotel, and a host of major retail brands] which will transform the town centre, we're seeing a Western Docks revival, the port's on the up, the town's on the up, and I'm hugely confident and optimistic about the amazing future we're making for Dover and how we can make it a great destination - a place to travel to, but not go through."

Often considered the gateway between Brit-

ain and Europe, Dover has strong links with Calais in France across the Channel, where mayor Natacha Bouchart has called for the current Le Touquet agreement of juxtaposed border controls.

"She's quite a character, isn't she?" Mr Elphicke said.

"But she obviously cares passionately about Calais, and I respect that, because I care passionately about Dover too.

"I work very closely with the president of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region because we see a great future of Kent and Calais to work ever

more closely together.

"We may be leaving the European Union but we're not leaving Europe, and France is a key trading partner for us, we don't see anything changing, in fact we want more co-operation and to work more closely.

"We're in contact all the time, on a weekly basis absolutely, and the people of Dover feel a deep understanding of the difficult times the people of Calais have with that horrible Jungle.

"They're not very keen on Brussels, but France is an old ally, Dover and Calais are twin towns and we need to deepen that co-operation so we end up with more tourists on both sides, more jobs, more money and more success."

Mr Elphicke says he speaks "un petit peu" French, though most communication is done in English.

And communication and teamwork can surely be considered two buzzwords of Mr Elphicke's tenure - as he insists, as "convenor of the Kent group", on regular meetings with fellow county MPs, county and district council leaders such as KCC's Paul Carter and Dover District Council's Paul Watkins, police and crime commissioner Matthew Scott and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

"Teamwork gets results - working together makes a difference to people's daily lives," he said.

That ethos appears to be spreading across the county, with five east Kent districts looking to merge and create one 'super council' in a bid to drive efficiency - a prospect Mr Elphicke wholeheartedly endorses.

"If they come to a proposal, and I hope that they will, it's really important for them to take it to the Kent MPs and to government and help make it work.

"If we're able to make massive cost savings and provide better services for the people of east Kent, it makes sense to do, but we need to see the proposal first.

"What we're looking at is not a unitary like Medway, it's a super district, and I'd be really interested to see the case they make."

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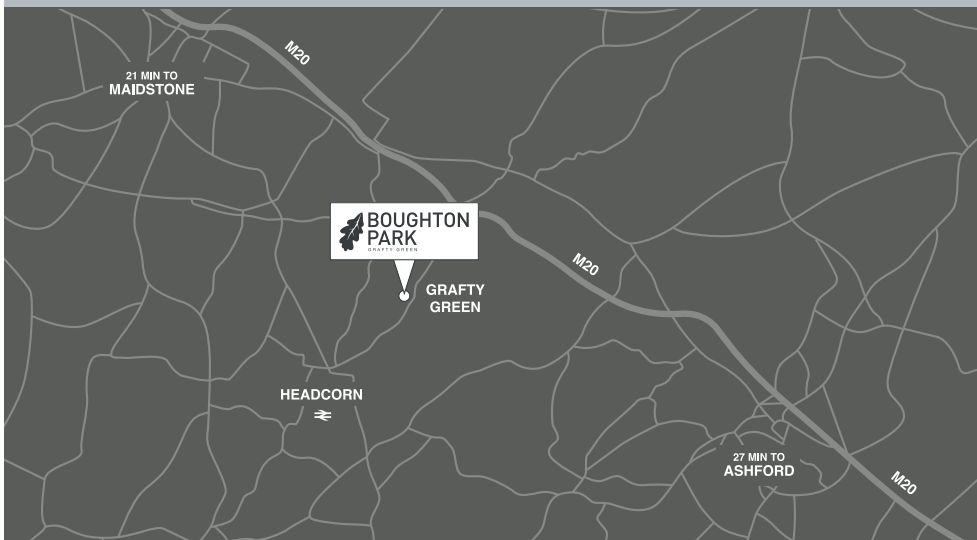
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START: Staff and VIPs mark the first work on a major new addition to the accident and emergency department of a hospital which has spent recent years in special measures

Work begins on £18m project to get A&E off life support machine

Adele Couchman heads to Gillingham as Medway Maritime seeks to improve emergency services

CONSTRUCTION work has begun on the final phase of an £18 million programme to redevelop the emergency department of the Medway Maritime Hospital.

And it is hoped it will allow it to take a giant stride out of the highly-publicised problems it has experienced.

The Medway NHS Foundation Trust, which runs the site in Gillingham, has been in special measures since July 2013.

In a damning report released by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in January, health watchdogs found the trust to be struggling in a number of areas - with its A&E department ranked "inadequate" and "not able to cope".

The CQC found that during the busiest times patients spent a long time waiting in corridors and were left unattended while they waited due to a lack of available beds.

The emergency department is currently designed for around 45,000 visitors but sees more than 110,000 people per year. On a typical day, Medway A&E sees over 110 ambulances per day - with more than ten ambulances per hour between 11am and 8pm.

But it is hoped the new majors area - which will be built next to the current ambulance bay for people with serious injuries and life-threatening conditions - will improve life for staff and patients.

Rochester and Strood MP Kelly Tolhurst welcomed the expansion of the

emergency department. She told KoS: "Medway has been on a progressive path of improvement over the last two years and the changes that have already been made are from my point of view a success.

"The feedback I have received from local people has been extremely positive. I was stopped yesterday by somebody who had an experience last week and they were singing the hospital's praises."

She added: "It's good news for users of Medway hospital and part of the development and improvement we have been waiting for."

Since 2014 the emergency department has been undergoing a major development programme, with the introduction of a new children's department, minors area and majors waiting area.

When the new majors building is finished in late 2017, there will 24 majors bays, seven bays in resuscitation, and 10 bays in the Clinical Decisions Unit (CDU).

Clare Hughes, a senior matron for the hospital's emergency programme, said the current A&E service is struggling to meet demand: "We are working currently in a department that is currently not fit for purpose. On one of our busiest days last July, we saw over 400 patients in a 24 hour period.

"Trying to provide good, quality emergency care to all those patients in such a small facility with poor conditions is really tricky. It's also hard for staff because they are working in such bad conditions.

"The new build of the majors de-

“ Trying to provide good, quality emergency care to all those patients in such a small facility with poor conditions is really tricky. ”

Clare Hughes,
Senior matron, Medway Maritime

partment will resolve the issues of overcrowding because we are doubling our capacity.

"Instead of working with 12 major cubicles we will be working with 24. We currently have a resuscitation area of five bays and that will go up to seven."

The emergency department at Medway has been known for treating patients in corridors during its busiest periods - although the hospital insists that whilst it is waiting for extra cubicles staff are able to protect patient safety.

"We've been criticised in the past that we've managed patients in inappropriate areas in the department," adds Ms Hughes.

"But what we have done is put a number of measures in place. So if patients have to be managed outside of our majors area, we carry out a very robust risk assessment and make

sure they can be managed in other areas of the department that aren't very ideal."

She added: "We've put significant improvements in the emergency department and now patients are managed in a much safer way and are provided with a high standard of emergency care."

Other improvements to Medway A&E include better nursing recruitment and a reduced reliance on agency staff - an area the CQC were concerned about in their last inspection.

On multiple occasions during their visit in August and September last year, the watchdog found that more than half of nurses on duty were from an agency.

"When I started here in December last year, we had a vacancy rate of 65 per cent and we were heavily reliant on agency staff", said Ms Hughes.

"We have improved that and our vacancy rate has now dropped to 17 per cent. We are much less reliant on agency staff, meaning we can train them ourselves and know they are providing a high standard of emergency care.

"One of the things we have put in place is an emergency care course run at BSc and MSc level affiliated to the University of Greenwich which will start next month.

"We are first trust in the region to provide that course at master's level.

"With so many nurses coming to us with a degree already, we will be in a very strong position to improve our recruitment because we can now offer them a master's course in emergency care."

ency care."

She added: "Nursing recruitment is an issue nationally. We're not the only ones suffering. However if we come out of special measures I think it will improve our recruitment even further."

The recent CQC report also highlighted there was a clear requirement for emergency department staff to receive further training to help improve the clinical assessment and overall experience a patient has when they arrive at Medway Maritime.

In response to this, the hospital's A&E has introduced a learning and development board, which sits monthly and oversees all training for doctors and nurses.

There have also been a number of key appointments to its clinical leadership team, including the appointment of a consultant nurse/educationalist, senior matron and general manager.

The Medway NHS Foundation Trust was originally placed in special measures by Sir Bruce Keogh because of concerns over mortality rates and standards of care in 2013.

During the most recent inspection in January, inspectors found the trust still needed to make significant improvements to ensure it was consistently delivering care which was safe, effective, caring, and responsive to people's needs.

But the troubled trust, which has seen a new management team installed in a bid to turn its fortunes around, insists standards are slowly improving.

Red carpet out as shop saved by villagers greets countess

Community stores rescued after group of locals teamed up with plush public school to ride to the rescue and make it a hub for the village and its residents

By Emily King

emily.king@archant.co.uk

A VILLAGE shop saved after the community it served rallied around to prevent it from closing, was given the royal seal of approval this week after the Countess of Wessex made a special visit.

The Countess, who grew up in west Kent, having lived in Brenchley and attended both Kent College in Pembury and West Kent College in Tonbridge, was the special guest of honour in celebrating the revival of the Benenden Community Shop.

In the space of two years, the shop was turned from the brink of collapse to a profitable venture - and is a solid example of how people can work together with local businesses to deliver benefits to all. It now acts not only as a village stores, but also a key community social hub.

Martin Pexton is the chairman and finance director of the shop's committee. He explained to KoS: "There's always been a shop in the village but it



had been in danger of closing for quite a while and the owners weren't enjoying it. It wasn't succeeding.

"In the end we were all saying we can't lose the shop, so we came up with a plan which included Benenden School."

The £11,900 a term public school is certainly no stranger to the royal family. In 1963, the Queen sent her eldest daughter Princess Anne to the school and was a regular visitor.

But it was the school's need for extra staff accommodation which proved key to its role in saving the shop.

Encouraged by locals from the village, they joined forces in an arrangement which saw the school acquire and renovate the premises. They use the living areas for staff accommodation and leased the commercial premises to the community.

Samantha Price, headteacher of Benenden School, explained: "When the group came to us we sat down with them and spoke about how we could make it work. In the end we were supporting the village and then it was supporting us."

The 12-people strong committee raised funds of £90,000 through share issues, grants and donations, enabling the shop to be fitted out and stocked. Together with a newly-created café, it is run by volunteers and paid managers.

Adds shop committee chairman Mr Pexton: "The shop wouldn't be viable without volunteer staff. We have over 40 regular volunteers, as well as five paid managers. The store brings in more money than the café but the café makes three times the profit. Now, together they're making enough profit to pay the managerial

team and keep the business running.

"Clearly we need to make money so we're doing plenty of promotions. Our wine tasting evenings are extremely popular, and the last one alone sold £2,500 worth of alcohol in one night which is more than we'd usually sell in two months.

"It's great fun, and we've realised if we don't create a fun working environment, we won't keep the volunteers that are so crucial to the business.

"But none of this could have happened without Sam Price and the school either."

Benenden School sends pupils to the shop and café on Sundays to volunteer as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, which requires those taking part to do voluntary work, in addition to a host of other worthwhile, character-forming ventures. It was another reason Ms Price agreed to the buying of the village asset.

The head explained: "The shop has always been a really important part of the lives of the girls at the school and the old shop was certainly look-



ing very tired. It's a great place for them to come on the weekends to get away from the grounds and socialise or use the free WiFi here.

"To have the opportunity to be able to support the village in refurbishing the shop to turn it into what we've got now and to give something back to the community is really important."

Volunteers usually take on one shift a week, and come from all walks of the community.

"It's a really wonderful part of the

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GREET: Countess of Wessex meets the likes of MP Helen Grant, right, at the shop's official opening this week - but fog proved problematic for two other planned visits in the county - both of which had to be cancelled after the royal helicopter was grounded.

village, and it's a great place to meet people," says volunteer, the Reverend David Commander. "I talk with people from the parish here. If they won't come into the church or knock on my door, I meet them here. It's a hub that enables everyone to work together, the community, the church, and the school."

The oldest person living in Benenden, 97-year-old George Jordan, informed KoS that all villagers take advantage of the shop. "I come down here at least once a day. The village is lovely, and this shop means I have somewhere to go everyday. I only live up the road, and when I come in, it's always busy."

And on Tuesday, the shop rolled out the red carpet for the visit of Sophie the Countess of Wessex.

She visited the shop and café and unveiled a plaque commemorating her morning there and the celebration of the official opening.

At an event attended by a host of dignitaries, the Lord Lieutenant of



MEET: Countess met staff and volunteers from the shop, which included pupils from Benenden who work there over the weekend

Kent, the Viscount De L'Isle, introduced the royal visitor to Maidstone and the Weald MP Helen Grant, mayor of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council David Neve and committee chairman Martin Pexton.

Mr Pexton escorted the countess into the shop and presented the managers - Melanie Harris, Susan Butchers, Viv Sheppard, Lorraine Charsley, Penny Roberts, accompanied by headteacher Samantha Price.

However, hopes the countess, wife of Prince Edward, would be able to conduct a string of other appoint-

ments in the county were scuppered by the heavy fog which hung over Kent on Tuesday.

She had been expected at the Medway Maritime Hospital in Gillingham to open a new bereavement suite and an exhibition space at Rochester Cathedral.

However, the fog meant the royal helicopter could not ferry her between engagements, and it was ruled there would not be time to travel via car between appointments.

Both openings continued as planned, but without Sophie.

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Author's shock as Aussie PM writes to praise her book

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

AN AUTHOR said she was “shaking for half an hour” after receiving a personal letter from the Australian prime minister revealing he would read her book to his grandchildren.

Faye Beerling, 48, began work in January on writing Little Wings - a children's book telling the tale of legendary pilot Amy Johnson, the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia, who died serving her country off the shores of Herne Bay in January 1941, with her body and the wreckage of her plane never found.

Ms Beerling, who previously worked as a driving test administrator before embarking on a writing career, said after publication in July, she wanted to reach out to the other side of the world and share the story with children Down Under.

“We got in touch with some muse-

ums and book shops and it's been selling well out there,” the author told KoS.

“But I thought ‘wouldn't it be lovely to send something to the prime minister?’ because I know he is a grandfather and these type of books are really educational.

“I was never expecting anything back, I just wanted to make him aware.”

It was to her complete shock, then, when last week she received a cream-coloured envelope marked with an unmistakable Australian crest.

“I thought ‘no, it can't be, surely’ - I couldn't open it, I just sat there looking at it,” she said.

Malcolm Turnbull thanked Miss Beerling for sending him a letter and a copy of the book and told her: “As a grandfather myself I understand how books enrich children's lives, and I'm sure my grandchildren will greatly appreciate your thoughtful gift.

“I look forward to reading your work to Isla.”

“I was shaking for half an hour,”

she said.

“It's short and sweet but what he said was significant and I'm certainly going to frame the letter.

“To know that the prime minister of Australia will be reading this book to his granddaughter fills me with pride and joy

“I just couldn't believe someone like that took time to write to this little, tiny author tucked away in Kent, it's amazing.”

The book itself tells the story of Ms Johnson through a jet, who is scared of heights and bullied by his peers.

“He's uncomfortable and nervous and that was my childhood,” said mother-of-one Ms Beerling, who lives in Herne Bay herself with husband, Howard.

“I was able to write a positive book about never giving up, never giving into bullying and believing in yourself.

“The feedback has been amazing - we sold 1,250 copies in the first few weeks and that was without any real pushing.”



IMPRESSED: Faye Beerling with Prince Michael of Kent, above, and the letter from the Australian PM.

Ms Beerling was present at the unveiling of a bronze statue of Ms Johnson in the town in September after years of campaigning by her friend, Jane Priston, where she also met Prince Michael of Kent.

“He was adorable and had all the time in the world for me,” she said.

“He asked a lot of questions about me and how the book was going and said his granddaughter loved it.”

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Dec			Jan		
Fri	2	7.00pm	Sun	1	No Performances
Sat	3	11.00am, 2.30pm, 7.00pm	Mon	2	11.00am, 2.30pm, 6.00pm
Sun	4	11.00am, 2.30pm, 7.00pm			
Mon	5	No Performances			
Tues	6	10.30am, 8.00pm			
Weds	7	10.30am, 6.00pm			
Thurs	8	10.30am, 6.00pm			
Fri	9	10.30am, 6.00pm			
Sat	10	11.00am, 2.30pm, 7.00pm			
Sun	11	11.00am, 2.30pm, 7.00pm			
Mon	12	No Performances			
Tues	13	10.30am, 2.00pm			
Weds	14	10.30am, 2.00pm, 6.00pm			
Thurs	15	10.30am, 2.00pm, 6.00pm			
Fri	16	No Performances			
Sat	17	11.00am, 2.30pm, 7.00pm			
Sun	18	2.30pm, 7.00pm			
Mon	19	No Performances			
Tues	20	11.00am, 2.30pm, 6.00pm			
Weds	21	11.00am, 2.30pm, 6.00pm			
Thurs	22	11.00am, 2.30pm, 6.00pm			
Fri	23	11.00am, 2.30pm, 6.00pm			
Sat	24	11.00am, 2.30pm, 6.00pm			
Sun	25	No Performances			
Mon	26	11.00am, 2.30pm, 6.00pm			
Tues	27	11.00am, 2.30pm, 6.00pm			
Weds	28	11.00am, 2.30pm, 6.00pm			
Thurs	29	2.30pm, 6.00pm			
Fri	30	2.30pm, 6.00pm			
Sat	31	11.00am, 2.30pm			

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A Kentish Christmas

Your guide to a perfect festive season in 2016

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Welcome to A Kentish Christmas 2016

AS we brace ourselves for a weekend of whizz bangs for Bonfire Night, it reminds us all that, lurking just around the corner, is the most magical time of the year.

Yes, Christmas fever is set to get under way in force over the coming weeks, and we hope this guide will help you get in the mood for what, to many, is a season full of fun and happiness.

Inside this special supplement, you'll find everything from a list (below) of some great events taking place around the county which will hopefully give you and your friends some memories to cherish, to a selection of decorations, and, of course, pantomimes taking place around the county.

And if that doesn't put you in the mood, then what about pushing the boat out this year and heading across the Channel to explore one



of Europe's premier Christmas markets; ideal for an extravagant family getaway or a romantic weekend away.

What's more, on these pages are further great ideas from our loyal advertisers;

whether it's a great meal out, event or inspiration for gifts or an unusual night out, there's bound to be something for everyone.

And the good news is, there will be a second help-

ing of A Kentish Christmas in the coming weeks, so don't forget to keep picking up your copy of Kent on Sunday each weekend; the perfect way to get set for the big day! See you then...



Get in the festive mood in style this year Why not try out these great events across the county?

What?

Whitefriars Christmas Market

Where?

Whitefriars, Canterbury

When?

November 26-December 24

More info:

Street traders and Santa in his grotto

What?

Santa at the Hop Farm

Where?

Hop Farm, Paddock Wood

When?

December 3-23

More info:

Meet the man himself before the big day

What?

The Christmas Experience

Where?

Bowl Water, Lamberhurst

When?

December 10-24

More info:

Help Santa and his elves with a tour around Bowl Water

What?

Ice rink, Tunbridge Wells

Where?



Calverley Grounds

When?

November 18-January 2

More info:

Tickets on sale now - so get your skates on!

What?

Grotto and ice skating

Where?

Bluewater

When?

November 24-December 24

More info:

Part of a host of festive fun at Bluewater

What?

Dickensian Christmas

Where?

High Street, Rochester

When?

December 3-4

More info:

Step back in time to Charles Dickens' time

What?

Christmas Grotto at the Reindeer Centre

Where?

Capralama Farm, Pluckley

When?

December 1-18

More info:

Meet Santa...and his real reindeers in a unique setting in the Kent countryside - a memorable experience.

What?

Spirit of Christmas

Where?

Quex Park, Birchington

When?

November 26-January 2

More info:

Ice rink, Santa and lots more

What?

Santa Specials

Where?

Kent & East Sussex Railway

When?

December 3-4

More info:

Take a steam train to visit Father Christmas at his grotto

What?

Christmas Markets

Where?

Leeds Castle (pictured)

When?

Weekends from December 3-23

More info:

Get great gift ideas and decorations from traders on the lawn in front of the castle

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A Kentish Christmas



Your essential guide

PANTOMIME is a tradition that dates back years, and for many, it completes their Christmas

festivities.

This year, the variety of shows being staged across the county is vast, and includes classics such as Jack and the Beanstalk, Peter Pan, and Snow White.

And with performances beginning in the coming weeks and running through to January there is plenty of time to book tickets to see your favourite story performed on stage.

Pantomime remains as popular as ever with its helter-skelter of emotions, drama, comedy, music and double entendres making audiences laugh year on year.

A number of familiar faces will be returning to Kent's pantos, including comedian Joe Pasquale, presenter Stephen Mulhern and EastEnders' Ricky Norwood.

Here is our guide to what's on, and where...

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Where: Dartford's Orchard Theatre

Dates: December 10 - 31

What: Starring comedian and national treasure Joe Pasquale, Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs will be spectacularly brought to life with an abundance of comedy, sensational song and dance numbers, fabulous costumes, stunning scenery and spectacular 3D effects.

Tickets: Visit orchardtheatre.co.uk or call 01322 220000

Dick Whittington

Where: Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre

Dates: November 25 - January 8

What: This fun-packed, family pantomime will star popular TV stars, Stephen Mulhern and Marlowe favourites, Ben Roddy and Lloyd Hollett. Once again, the show will be written and directed by Paul Hendy and brought to you by Evolution, the same team behind last year's panto hit. The show promises to be spectacular, top-quality

family entertainment with the emphasis on strong casting, high production values and a genuinely funny script.

Tickets: Visit marlowetheatre.com or call 01227 787787.

Cinderella

Where: Margate's Winter Gardens

Dates: November 30 - December 4

What: They're back, those adorable sisters' Pinot and Grigio return to the Margate Winter Gardens for the family panto. Handsome Prince Charming and his side kick Dandini, have to find the perfect royal bride, but in Pantoland nothing is ever quite what it seems.

Tickets: Visit margatewintergardens.co.uk or call 01843 292795

Sleeping Beauty

Where: Maidstone's Hazlitt Theatre

Dates: December 2 - January 2

What: The story of Sleeping Beauty is a classic tale full of magic, princes, a spinning wheel and a family sized dollop of good old pantomime humour.

Tickets: Visit parkwoodtheatres.co.uk or call 01622 758611.

Jack and the Beanstalk

Tickets: Visit theatrEROYALmar-

Where: Broadstairs' Memorial Theatre

Dates: December 13 - 30

What: Following on from last year's Aladdin, the popular, traditional pantomime season continues this Christmas. The production is brought to life by the same creative team that have delighted audiences for the past six years and this year's production promises to be the same magical family fun.

Tickets: Visit ents24.com

Peter Pan

Where: Margate's Theatre Royal

Dates: December 10 - 31

What: Firm favourite Jezzo returns to play the hilarious pirate Smee and after his dastardly performance as Abanazar in last year's Aladdin, Rob Cummings returns as Captain Hook. Watch as Peter Pan, Wendy and the children fly on until morning to beat the vicious Captain Hook and give a loving home once more to the lost boys. But lurking in the water is the nasty croc just waiting to get the upper hand of anyone who dares come close. With all the fabulous scenery, costumes, special effects and laughter you'll wish once they fly they will Never Land.

Tickets: Visit theatrEROYALmar-



READY: Cast of Snow White get into costume ahead of stint at the Assembly Hall Theatre

East

kent-life.co.uk kentnews.co.uk

A Kentish Christmas

BIG: Marlowe production is traditionally one of the most in-demand



to the panto season



HI-DE-HI: Su Pollard hits the stage in Tunbridge Wells

gate.com or call 01843 292795.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Where: Tunbridge Wells' Assembly Hall

Dates: December 9 - January 2

What: Starring Su Pollard as the Wicked Queen and Jamie Rickers (from Ctv and Nickelo-deon) as Muddles, with Millie Booth as Snow White and Jamie Steen as Nursie, UK Productions bring you Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, with sparkling sets, beautiful costumes, hilarious antics, wonderful special effects and loads of sing-along, laugh-along fun.

Tickets: Visit assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk or call 01892 530613.

Jack and the Beanstalk

Where: Chatham's Central Theatre

Dates: December 8 - 31

What: Join Jack on the adventure of a lifetime as he bounds up the beanstalk to do battle with Giant Blunderbore. Does Dame Trott finally get her man? Can Simple Simon work out which end of the cow needs

milking? Will Clarabelle the cow remember all her dance mooooo-ves? Find out in a pantomime that scales new heights, with a stomping giant and all the magic and mayhem of a traditional Christmas extravaganza.

Tickets: Visit medwayticket-slave.co.uk or call 01634 338338.

Sleeping Beauty

Where: Sevenoaks' Stag Community Arts Centre

Dates: December 2 - January 8

What: This year EastEnders' Fat Boy, Ricky Norwood, stars alongside 90's pop sister act Cleopatra, who will be reforming to play Sleeping Beauty's panto fairies. Sevenoaks Panto regulars Jasette Amos, Peter Brad Leigh and Richard Tate also star. Featuring a live band, stunning sets and costumes, a star cast, and all the usual laughs and traditions.

Tickets: Visit stagevenoaks.co.uk or call 01732 450175.

Jack and the Beanstalk

Where: Gravesend's Woodville Theatre

Dates: December 10 - January 2



What: Antony Costa from Blue will star as the panto baddie, Fleshcreep. He'll be joined by Jaz Ellington from BBC1's The Voice and Olivier Award winning West End performer Leanne Jones, as well as panto favourites Payne and Pearce, in this year's festive treat.

Tickets: Visit woodville.seatlive.com or call 08442 439 480.

Peter Pan

Where: Bromley's Churchill Theatre

Dates: December 9 - January 7

What: Craig Revel Horwood will star as Captain Hook in the swashbuckling family panto adventure. This production will be spectacularly brought to life with an abundance of comedy, stunning sets, fabulous costumes and pantomime magic.

Tickets: Visit churchilltheatre.co.uk or call 020 3285 6000.

Jack and the Beanstalk

Where: Folkestone's Leas Cliff Hall

Dates: December 21 - January 7

What: From the creative team behind past pantomimes such as Cinderella and Aladdin, comes this year's spectacular. The well-known tale gets the CT Productions twist. The story of a poor family, a cow that's sold at market for magic beans, that lead Jack on an adventure bigger than he ever could have imagined. Stunning costumes, amazing sets, special effects, song and dance numbers along with a script filled with jokes, crazy characters and audience participations ensure a pantomime season treat for the whole family. Oh yes it does!

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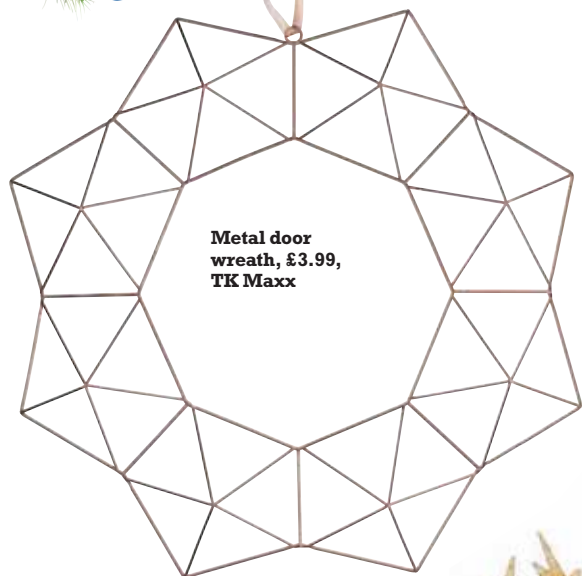
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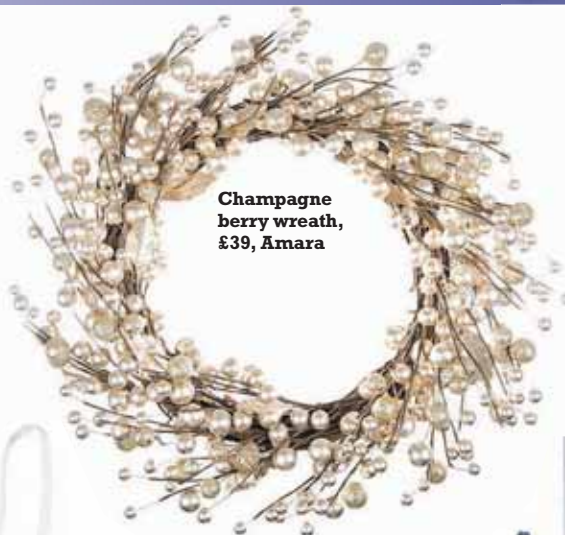
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Top five...

christmas markets

Get into the festive spirit with a cup of mulled wine at one of these magnificent winter markets

Words Anna Freeman



Bremen, Germany

This breathtaking destination has one of the most atmospheric Christmas markets in Germany, if not Europe. With the grand town hall as its backdrop and over 170 decked-out stalls, you'll be transported to a winter wonderland lined with log fires and torch lights. Smell the warming scent of brewing mulled wine and cinnamon as you head to one of the medieval-style taverns, and catch a melody or two from the carollers singing their hearts out.

Market Square and Schlachte Embankment, Bremen, November 21 - December 23

Continued on page 33




Colmar, France

If you're looking for a truly mesmerising experience, then head to the French city of Colmar which is steeped in architectural history. Illuminations will link you to the city's five markets through a labyrinth of small streets lined with half-timbered houses dating back a century. Each site champions the craftsmanship of its Alsace residents with unique products to buy and try. Wine-tasting, guided tours and toy exhibitions are also available so this unsung destination is a must.

Colmar town centre, November 25 - December 31

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Continued from page 31

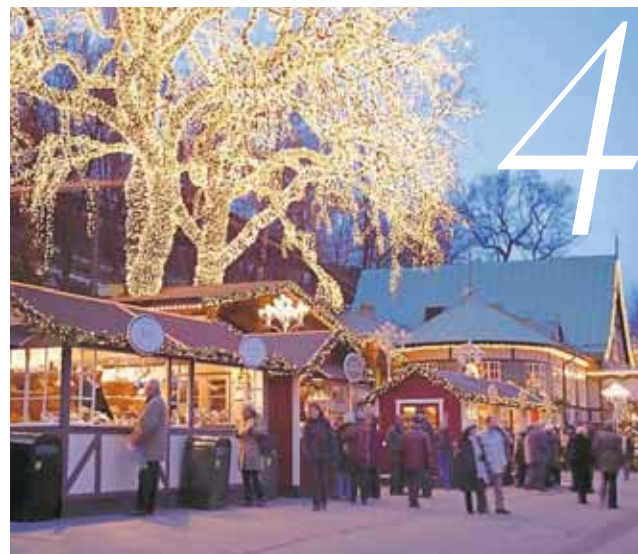


Manchester, UK

You don't have to book flights to witness the magic of Christmas as this northern city plays host to one of the best markets in the UK. The main site is located at the famous Albert Square, and every year the festivities are kicked off with nearly 350 intricately decorated stalls brimming with gifts, crafts, jewellery

and toys. Taste the mouth-watering international foods on offer as you mooch around the different makeshift chalets, and take a seat at the bar and enjoy a German beer or two.

Manchester city centre, November 10 - December 20



Gothenburg, Sweden

Jump on a plane to picturesque Gothenburg.

The Liseburg Christmas Market is the largest in Sweden, with more than 60 stalls selling local goods and a popular open air ice rink nearby. Sample delicacies such as smoked sausage, reindeer meat, glögg (mulled wine) and traditional sweets as

you meander through the snow-topped wooden sheds.

Make sure you pack a warm coat and woolly hat as temperatures often hit below freezing at this time of year.

Liseburg Amusement Park, November 18 - December 30



Copenhagen, Denmark

Why go to one Christmas market, when you can go to seven? During the festive season Copenhagen is awash with roasting nuts and steaming wine as various locations around the city put on a decorative display.

The market in Tivoli Gardens is a favourite among residents with its white-tipped trees, Santa

and his reindeer, fairy lights and a heavy dose of the Nordic winter atmosphere.

Other popular spots include the Freetown Christiania yuletide bash, the beautiful Nyhavn harbour wooden chalets and the cosy markets at the renaissance castle Kronborg.

Tivoli Gardens, November 19 - December 31

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OPPORTUNITY: Ollie Tourle and Assembly Hall's theatre director JJ Almond have worked together on the project. Photo credit: Emily Dews.

Emerging from shadows as star walks into the spotlight

Normally backstage, Ollie Tourle will headline a very special show this month

NORMALLY, when the house lights go down, amateur producer, Ollie Tourle, 25, is backstage of one of Kent's major theatres.

But for one night only this month he will have the spotlight on him after being given the chance to produce and perform his own one-man show at Tunbridge Wells' Assembly Hall Theatre.

It will be a show with a difference, however, with the audience not where you would expect them to observe the talent.

With entry through the stage door, the audience watching his show, *Live and Backstage*, will experience the background and on-stage work carried out by production and lighting crews, all while Mr Tourle performs a collection of songs to an empty auditorium. The

young producer's aim is to present a show from the perspective of the performer's eye.

Of the opportunity, he explained to KoS: "I've worked backstage mainly, and only had my first gig on stage last year. The reason why I chose *Live and Backstage* as the theme to my show is because I thought it would be nice to give people the experience that a performer usually gets. The audience will be looking out onto an empty auditorium.

"Looking out onto the auditorium is an amazing feeling. It inspires me.

"The theatre here means a lot to me, I did my first work experience here and I used to come here with my grandparents to watch shows. It's a privilege to be able to perform here."

Incorporating local performers

into the hall's schedule is important claims theatre director JJ Almond.

He explained: "We need to look at who the theatre makers of the future will be, who will the producers of the future be, and who will be the performers and the artists of the future. We've got an amazing team here with brilliant skills and we should be sharing those to help people learn and to present them with opportunities."

Getting involved is key for those wishing to grasp similar opportunities to Mr Tourle's, says Mr Almond: "Look in your parish, town or city for all the opportunities available. You need to be like Ollie, take the initiative and get in contact."

When it comes to Mr Tourle's show, the theatre director and performer have been working closely to make sure everything runs smoothly and the experience is eve-

rything Mr Tourle hopes it will be.

"Ollie has brought the ideas, he's completely in control of his own show, he's the producer and the artist. But what we've tried to do is say, we've got people who can help you with press and marketing, go and talk to them and figure out what to do next," tells Mr Almond.

"Most of the crew have volunteered their time to support him as their colleague, and that's where he's lucky, because he has that relationship there."

Mr Tourle will be singing a variety of covers but with his "own twist". He has performed shows elsewhere in the county and in a number of theatre productions.

Live and Backstage with Oliver Tourle will take place at the Assembly Hall, Tunbridge Wells on November 26. Entry via Stage Door from 7pm. Tickets cost £18

» Email us details of your event to: editorial@kosmedia.co.uk
Tel: 01233 653476



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Enjoy a Waterloo Sunset on a Sunny Afternoon with top show

By Emily King

emily.king@archant.co.uk

AN acclaimed musical celebrating the music and the magic of The Kinks hits theatres in the county later this month.

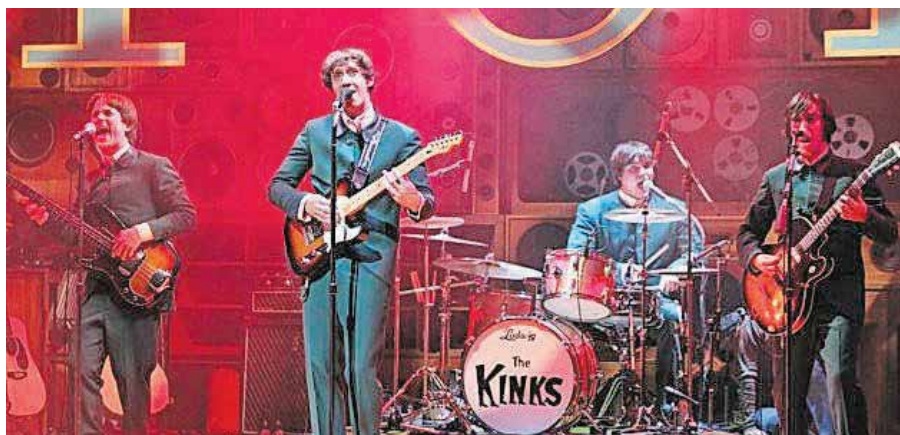
Sunny Afternoon scooped four Olivier Awards in 2015 and has proved a big hit with audiences.

The tour will star Ryan O'Donnell as Ray Davies, with Mark Newnham as Dave Davies, Garmon Rhys as bassist Pete Quaife and Andrew Gallo as drummer Mick Avory.

Featuring some of The Kinks' best-loved songs, including You Really Got Me, Waterloo Sunset and Lola, Sunny Afternoon tells the story of the early life of Ray Davies and the rise to stardom of one of Britain's most influential and popular bands.

Set against the back-drop of a Britain caught mid-swing between the conservative 1950s and riotous 60s, this production explores the highs and lows of the band.

Following a sell-out run at Hampstead Theatre, Sunny Afternoon opened to critical acclaim at



CLASSICS: The show looks at the performances of The Kinks and has proved a big hit

the Harold Pinter Theatre in London's West End in October 2014.

The show has music and lyrics by Ray Davies with a book by Joe Penhall and original story by Ray Davies.

And for Ryan O'Donnell, playing the lead singer was no easy task.

"It is exhausting," he told KoS. "Ray doesn't leave the stage at all, he sings every song (26) apart from one."

"On the days when we are performing, we try to chill out as much as possible, because with touring we don't have much time to explore. We try to grab time to sit in coffee shops and relax from time to time," says Mark Newnham who plays Dave Davies.

Mr Newnham hopes that when audiences leave they've "learnt something from The Kinks that they didn't already know".

Mr O'Donnell says "The script is great and as the music's live it's even better."

The show will be at Dartford's Orchard Theatre from November 15-19, and Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre from April 4-8 2017.

To book tickets for Dartford visit orchardtheatre.co.uk or call 01322 220000. And for Canterbury tickets visit marlowetheatre.com or call 01227 787787.

TV's Vic Reeves auction

COMIC and artist Vic Reeves will be staging an exhibition and online auction of original art works from November 7 to 13.

Unsold works will be offered in a subsequent sale by auction on November 13.



Big Country anniversary

SCOTTISH rock band Big Country are bringing the 30th anniversary of their album The Seer to Herne Bay.

The band will be coming to the King's Hall on November 10.

For tickets visit thekingshall.com or call 01227 374 188.

Irish Rose-Marie visits

IRISH singing star Rose-Marie is coming to Margate.

The concert takes place at the Theatre Royal on February 24 2017.

For tickets from November 3 visit theatreroyalmargate.com



South East railways lecture

GEOLOGIST, Graham Birch, will give a talk titled Engineering the Railways of the South East.

The lecture takes place on Thursday, November 17 at The Angel Centre, Tonbridge and starts promptly at 6.30pm.

For more information or to reserve your free place, email kesheg@gmail.com.



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Frankly Sinatra tribute

THE world's top tribute Frank Sinatra is coming to Chatham's Central Theatre to celebrate the golden anniversary of Ol' Blue Eyes on November 11.

For tickets visit the website medwayticketslive.co.uk



Cinderella pantomime

DEAL'S Astor Theatre will host pantomime Cinderella next month.

The theatre's resident theatre group will present the show which will run between December 7-10.

It has been adapted by Debbie Pinfold.

For tickets visit theastor.org

Comedy Seriously Dead

TV's Crissy Rock (Benidorm), and Frazer Hines (Emmerdale) star in comedy Seriously Dead coming to Dartford's Orchard Theatre on November 6.

For tickets visit orchardtheatre.co.uk



Gift of the Wedding Present

INDIE band the Wedding Present will play at Rochester's Royal Function Rooms on November 21.

Formed in 1985, the Wedding Present are one of the UK's most longstanding indie bands with 18 UK top 40 hit singles to their name.

For tickets visit royalfunctionrooms.com.

Grandson on how he was given Mousetrap

By Emily King

emily.king@archant.co.uk

THE Mousetrap is famous around the world for being the longest running show of any kind in the history of theatre, with over 26,000 performances in London and now the 60th anniversary production is here for the first time.

In her own inimitable style, Dame Agatha Christie created an atmosphere of suspense and an intricate plot where murder lurks around every corner.

KoS spoke this week to her grandson, Mathew Prichard about what it was like to have such a famous grandmother.

"I suppose it took some time for it to sink in that she was famous," says Mr Prichard. "The headmaster at my school insisted on installing all books that came into the school. One year I came back with the newest Agatha Christie novel but it went missing for a while. I later found out the headteacher's wife had borrowed it to read. In such small ways, therefore, I did become aware of how talented she was."



Mr Prichard would often get to hear the novels' plots before anyone else.

"She would manage to write a book almost without anyone noticing and sometimes she used to read the new one to us in the summer. She did so partly, I suspect, to test audience reaction, but partly to entertain us on wet afternoons," he tells.

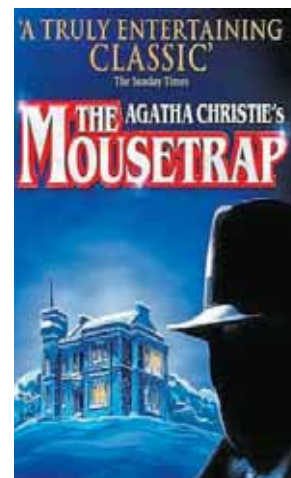
"It is well-known that she gave me The Mousetrap for my ninth birthday. It was incredibly generous of her to give away such

a play to her grandson," says Mr Prichard.

"She loves giving pleasure to others - good food, a holiday, a present or a birthday ode. She loved enjoying herself and also to see others around her enjoying themselves. My impressions are rather personal ones."

The Mousetrap is coming to Tunbridge Wells' Assembly Hall from November 7 to 12.

For tickets visit assemblyhall-theatre.co.uk or call 01892 530613.



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HOSTS: The Assembly Hall Theatre will host the show

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Viva l'Italia says restaurateur Antonio Carluccio

With the release of his new book, *Vegetables*, the chef talks money, his homeland and aggressive chefs

ANTONIO Carluccio's home is brimming with personal touches.

"Those grapes out there are from a cutting I brought to London 41 years ago," the 79-year-old declares proudly, gesturing towards a branch heavy with black fruit, which I'm informed will be used for making wine later.

It's a homely house, full of rustic paintings, photographs, cushions and books.

"I like to have money, because money is good," he says, crinkling his eyes. "But it's not too good, you know?"

"If you have enough, it's fine. It solves many, many problems, but there are people that are avidly attached to it. It's balance."

Brought up in the country's north-west region, one of six children, Carluccio briefly worked as a journalist in Turin before moving to Vienna and then Germany, and eventually to London to work as a wine merchant, before devoting himself to food with the opening of his Neal Street Restaurant in 1981, followed by the first Carluccio's Caffè in 1998.

Although he's since sold his interest in the now famous restaurant chain, he's still involved from a distance, and clearly proud of its success.

Next on the menu is his new book, *Vegetables*, within which roots and greens take the glory - and that's before we talk about his upcoming TV series in Australia.

"Italians love vegetables as much



HAPPY: Antonio Carluccio

as they love meat or fish, there's no difference," he notes.

"I am not a monk, don't misunderstand me, never would be a monk," he retorts. "I'm a humanist, so that means I like human beings."

And with his hands resting on a newspaper, he's eager to discuss what he believes are overly strict restrictions on civil liberties, such as the recent call for a ban on offering biscuits with hot drinks in cafes.

"They forbid the biscuits with the coffee because it's too fattening," he explains with a sigh.

"You can't just deny people something like this. Let him do it, but let him do it responsibly. Teach them."

While he takes food seriously he's not fond of aggressive chefs.

"I respect very much Raymond Blanc for what he does, Giorgio Locatelli, Brian Turner, Pierre Koffmann, Marco Pierre White, but not Gordon Ramsay. I don't like him," he says.

"Not even his cooking, he's just pretentious. The very fact that he has to swear, and to bring a regime in the kitchen. They are not military."

With frequent marriage proposals from fans, a string of celebrity devotees (not least Jamie Oliver) and a real pride in hospitality, it's hard to imagine Carluccio bawling someone out for not reaching his standards.

"My philosophy is to be happy and to make people happy," he reasons. "And by result, if you make people happy they make you happy."

Wingham novelist

FOLLOWING the success of her previous titles, author Carolyn McCrae is set to publish her seventh novel, *Second Strand*.

Second Strand is a murder mystery novel following a couple Alex and Teri, on the verge of breaking up after 12 years together. It links in with her fifth novel *Her Parents' Daughter*.

It's due for release on January 28 2017.

Stone House Drama

THE Stone House Drama Club are playing a gig in Gravesend before heading into the studio to finish their new album.

This gig will be filmed as part of an upcoming live album and concert video that will be released in 2017.

If anyone in Gravesend would like to be a part of this live concert video they should head to The Prince Albert on December 16.

Revolution in cinema

IN March 2017 *Revolution: New Art for a New World* will be coming to a multiplex at Westwood Cross.

The film commemorates 100 years since the Russian Revolution.

It hosts an impressive cast consisting of James Fleet (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*), Matthew MacFadyen (*Ripper Street*), Eleanor Tomlinson (*Poldark*).

It's at Vue Thanet on November 10.

The Carnival Band

A unique celebratory show of Christmas music on renaissance and modern instruments is coming to Margate in December.

Maddy and the Carnival Band put their stamp on familiar and no so familiar festive songs.

The show is coming to Margate's Theatre Royal on December 3.

For tickets call 01843 292795.

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♦
Creamy leek and potato soup

♦
Salmon and prawn mousse served with
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MAIN COURSES

Traditional roast Norfolk turkey with pigs in blankets
and cranberry stuffing

♦
Delice of salmon over crushed new potato cake topped
with a julienne of root veg & hollandaise

♦
Roast loin of pork in a cream and pomey mustard sauce
served with dauphinoise potatoes

♦
Vegetable coulibiac with passata and a timbale of rice

DESSERTS

Christmas pudding with brandy sauce

♦
Cream filled profiteroles with hot chocolate sauce

♦
Glazed lemon tart with a black cherry compote

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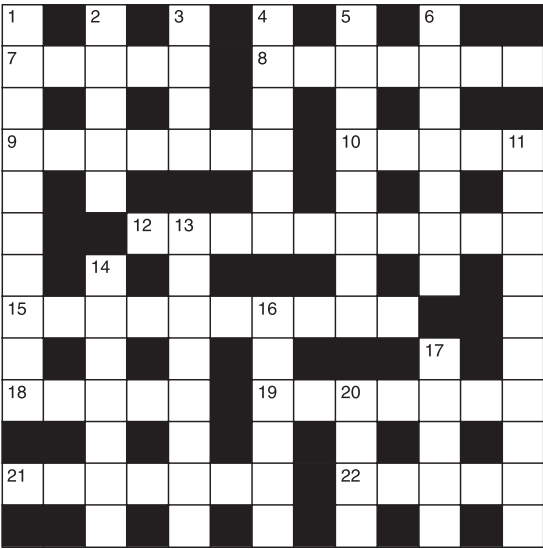


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PUZZLES

DOUBLE CROSSWORD



Quick

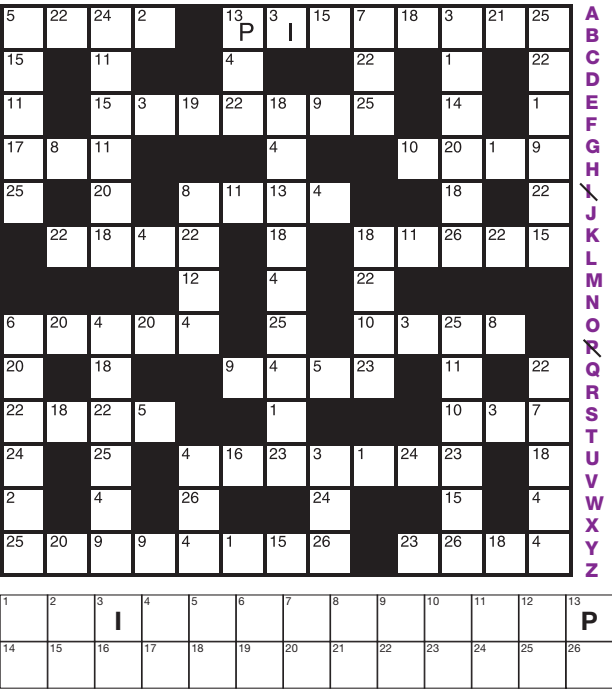
- Across
- 7. Angry (5)
 - 8. Perplex (7)
 - 9. Haven (7)
 - 10. Delete (5)
 - 12. Paternity (10)
 - 15. Completely (10)
 - 18. Additional (5)
 - 19. Quiver (7)
- Down
- 21. Terse (7)
 - 22. Way (5)
6. Keeper (7)
- 11. Imperilled (10)
 - 13. Fragrant (8)
 - 14. Omen (7)
 - 16. Assemble (6)
 - 17. Concerning (5)
 - 20. Merit (4)

Cryptic

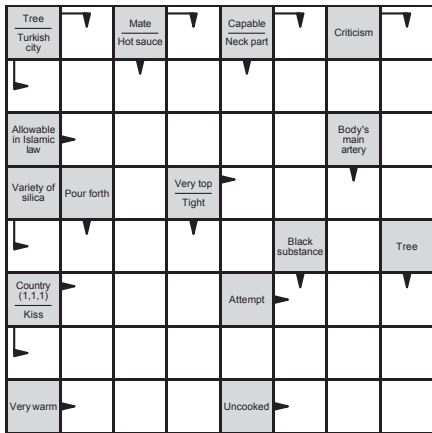
- Across
- 7. Hanging wasn't good enough for Polonius (5)
 - 8. Evened the score by bribery? (7)
 - 9. Stop and go after amber changes (7)
 - 10. Relieves when there's rough seas about the East (5)
 - 12. Solemnly declare as almost cut-rate (10)
 - 15. Secures rent for one of a group of shops (5,5)
 - 18. Half-hearted meal but still very good (5)
 - 19. Nice coastal environment (7)
 - 21. Indeed a cancelled service should be (7)
 - 22. The atmosphere in a small company may be capital (5)
- Down
- 1. Construct ways to run off (4,6)
 - 2. Be under professional examination (5)
 - 3. It's sure to upset an employer (4)
 - 4. A wild horse on land (6)
 - 5. A train driver (8)
 - 6. Weep over last broken glass (7)
 - 11. Does he take a chance or just think about it? (10)
 - 13. Foreign girl tries on a new design (8)
 - 14. Swimmer who may develop into a jumper (7)
 - 16. Tried a form of abuse (6)
 - 17. Alice is out to get her (5)
 - 20. Deputy in the grip of depravity (4)

CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter. For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.



Arrowword



Enter your answers in the direction indicated by the arrows.

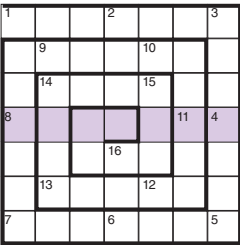
Battleships

Find where ships shown below are hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some of the squares have been filled to start you off.

THE FLEET
1 x Battleship
2 x Cruiser
3 x Destroyer
4 x Submarine



Word Spiral

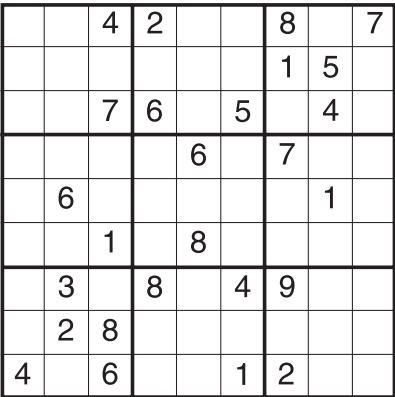


Starting from 1, fill in the grid clockwise with four-letter words. The last letter of each word becomes the first letter of the next to reveal the key word in the shaded boxes.

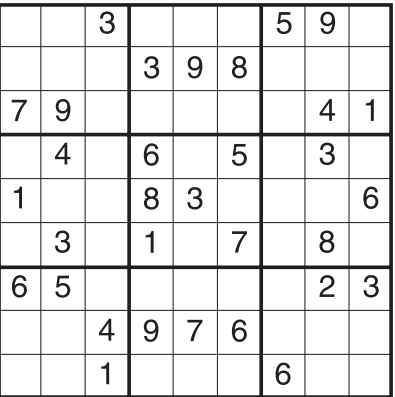
- 1. Hotel cook
 - 2. Visage
 - 3. Resound
 - 4. Musical instrument
 - 5. Otherwise
 - 6. Dutch cheese
 - 7. Office note
 - 8. Leave out
 - 9. Lilliputian
 - 10. Abominable snowman
 - 11. Press
 - 12. Bird's home
 - 13. Canvas shelter
 - 14. Body powder
 - 15. Cod
 - 16. Greek letter
- Keyword clue: A Canadian province

SUDOKU

Hard



Easy



Solutions

Double Crossword

3 Zero: 4 Scorch; 5 Ontario
Integral: 6 Curator; 11 Endangered; 13 Squamate; 14 Portent; 16 Gather; 17 About; 20 Earn.
Codeword
1=N, 2=K, 3=L, 4=E, 5=B, 6=O, 7=G, 8=H, 9=D, 10=F, 11=O, 12=L, 13=P, 14=J, 15=W, 16=X, 17=Z, 18=U, 19=M, 20=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
Word Spiral
1 Chet; 2 Face; 3 Echo; 4 Oboe; 5 Elise; 6 Edam; 7 Memo; 8 Om; 9 Tiny; 10 Yell; 11 Iron; 12 Nest; 13 Tent; 14 Talc; 15 Crisp; 16 Beta.
Keyword: Ontario

Battleships

16 Trade; 17 Cella; 18 Trade; 19 Tadpole; 20 Speculator; 21 M; 22=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
15=L, 16=X, 17=W, 18=R, 19=Z, 20=U, 21=M, 22=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
12=L, 13=P, 14=J, 15=W, 16=X, 17=Z, 18=U, 19=M, 20=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
9=D, 10=F, 11=O, 12=L, 13=P, 14=J, 15=W, 16=X, 17=Z, 18=U, 19=M, 20=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
5=B, 6=O, 7=G, 8=H, 9=D, 10=F, 11=O, 12=L, 13=P, 14=J, 15=W, 16=X, 17=Z, 18=U, 19=M, 20=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
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Sudoku - Hard

16 Trade; 17 Cella; 18 Trade; 19 Tadpole; 20 Speculator; 21 M; 22=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
15=L, 16=X, 17=W, 18=R, 19=Z, 20=U, 21=M, 22=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
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Sudoku - Easy

16 Trade; 17 Cella; 18 Trade; 19 Tadpole; 20 Speculator; 21 M; 22=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
15=L, 16=X, 17=W, 18=R, 19=Z, 20=U, 21=M, 22=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
12=L, 13=P, 14=J, 15=W, 16=X, 17=Z, 18=U, 19=M, 20=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
9=D, 10=F, 11=O, 12=L, 13=P, 14=J, 15=W, 16=X, 17=Z, 18=U, 19=M, 20=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
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Arrowword

16 Trade; 17 Cella; 18 Trade; 19 Tadpole; 20 Speculator; 21 M; 22=A, 23=T, 24=C, 25=S, 26=Y.
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Why would you choose Kazakhstan?

Lots of reasons, says Mike Pickup, even though he has to look up in the atlas to see where it is...

The atlas tells me this central Asian country shares its borders with Russia to the north, China to the

west, and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to the south. It's the largest landlocked country in the world and the ninth largest, yet it's home to just 17 million people - the same as London and the Home Counties.

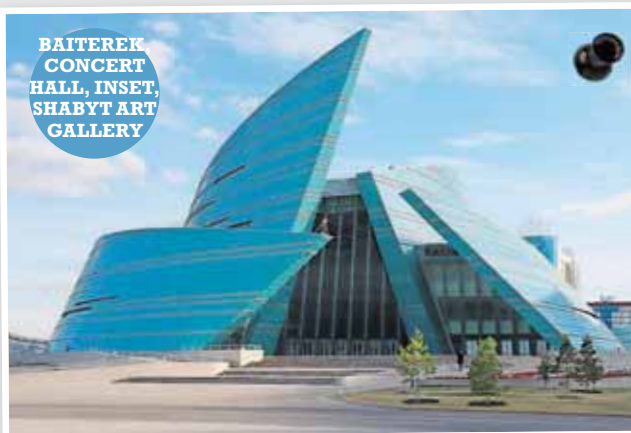
Kazakhstan is where apples and garlic originated and is home to some of the world's rarest tulips. Wildlife includes red bears, snow leopards and bird life including golden eagles, flamingos and falcons. It's a twitcher's paradise.

My visit covers the two major cities, traditional Almaty, the old capital and modern Astana, the new capital. Visa requirements for

British visitors have been waived until the end of 2017 for stays of less than 15 days.

I fly with Air Astana, direct. It has won "Best Airline in Central Asia and India" for five consecutive years.

I find Kazakhstan gained independence from the USSR in 1991. Food is generally good but the service a little haphazard. Menus in English are not that plentiful but they have pictures! Thanks to devaluation of the local currency, the Tenge, prices are inexpensive.



BAITEREK CONCERT HALL, INSET, SHABYT ART GALLERY

I visited Panfilov Park, home to the magnificent Russian Orthodox Zenkov Cathedral, probably the only wooden cathedral in the world. It was built using just a few nails. The park itself is a memorial to soldiers lost in the two world wars.

Almaty narrowly lost out to Beijing to host the 2022 Winter Olympics. The Medeo skating rink, at over 5,500ft above sea level, is the

world's highest. Our guide tells us that girls skate in bikinis and it's where many boys meet future wives!

Astana is a purpose-built capital city. Architect Norman Foster is responsible for some of its structures. I visited amazing buildings such as the presidential palace, a cross between the White House and a mosque, the concert hall, Baiterek - which looks like a

How to get there

Air Astana offers return flights between Heathrow and Astana from £492 year-round.

Air Astana Holidays can add transfers and hotel accommodation to make up a complete package. For example three nights in Almaty and three in Astana with all flights, transfers and hotels on a B&B basis costs from just £729 per passenger.

This includes city tours of Almaty and Astana and a seasonal bonus, such as a visit to the Arasan Baths in Almaty or a day skiing at Shymbulak. Optional extras include Trekking, Mountain Biking and Golf. Go to <http://airastana.com/uk/en-US> or contact the London office on 020 7333 0196, Mon-Fri, 0900 - 1730.

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Please include your name and address, although these will be withheld in exceptional circumstances, and a daytime phone number for verification (this will not be published). We reserve the right to edit all letters.

We voted exit so let's just leave

WHEN 544 MPs voted in favour of holding a referendum did they have their fingers crossed behind their back? Did we hear any of them state that it would be a binding result only if the vote was to stay in? Did anyone of them say, then, that it was 'advisory'?

MPs may claim that parliament is sovereign and that they alone, notwithstanding the vote's result, may decide whether to stay or leave, but the vote to come out of the union returns that very same sovereignty to Westminster that had been arrogated to/by Europe.

Edward Baker,
 Tunbridge Wells

We'll still fight arms firm trade

EACH week more and more disturbing information emerges about the war crimes being committed in Yemen by Saudi Arabia's military, and yet in Thanet, Craig Mackinlay MP continues to stand by an arms company which - public records show - exports components to Saudi.

More than a third of targets in Yemen have been civilian buildings, including hospitals, while ITV News says it has seen evidence of UK-made cluster bombs being used in Yemen. Meanwhile, pictures of malnourished Yemeni civilians have been filtering out.

Instro Precision and its parent company Elbit Systems, which Mr Mackinlay is so loyal to, not only sells military products to Saudi Arabia but - public documents show - also to other human rights abusers including Israel, Egypt and Turkey. Instro's plans for expansion are being actively opposed by people across Thanet and wider Kent.

Patrick Foy,
 East Kent Against the Arms Trade

We need to think ambidextrously

THE Kent Anti-Racism Network and Thanet Stand Up To Racism groups, whilst claiming to be anti-fascist, are protesting in favour of open borders.

Ironically, it is our open borders policy that is allowing homicidal undercover Isis recruits (themselves fascists) to enter this country unrestricted.

Fanatical left-wingers are as dangerous as their violent far-right counterparts. Viewing everything from one rigid, conformed perspective is guaranteed to cloud the judgement.

Those who loudly proclaim to be either entirely left or right-wing are

LETTER OF THE WEEK



Forget Heathrow, we have Manston to offer

IN RESPONSE to your article last week [Celebrations as Boris' plans for Estuary airport are grounded].

As Boris Johnson said: "The day when the bulldozers move in is a long way off... we are going to see an inevitable fight in the courts... I think it's very likely it will be stopped."

After a year of further consultation, judicial reviews and appeals against planning applications, it could take up to 15 years before any new runway is actually operational. In that time the cost to the UK in revenue lost to mainland Europe could be immense.

Meanwhile, in Kent we have an extraordinarily wide, 2,750 metre runway lying idle. Manston Airport has accommodated some of the largest aircraft currently flying, such as the British Airways Dreamliner and Boeing Airbus A380. Manston could provide a solution, at least in the interim, to the lack of runway space in the south east. The infrastructure to Manston Airport

has improved considerably in recent years with upgraded roads and with a new Thanet Parkway Station in the pipeline which will reduce HS1 train times from London to Manston to less than one hour. The airspace above Manston is uncongested, unlike Heathrow and Gatwick.

The airport has the support of the majority of the public and local politicians. An airport will, from day one, employ a range of skilled and unskilled personnel. It would provide links to local colleges offering engineering apprenticeships. It would have a positive knock on effect for local business and has the potential to attract aviation related companies to the area.

Manston Airport is a prized resource which is unique to Kent. The potential and prestige of having an international airport on our doorstep cannot be overestimated.

Ruth Bailey
 Chair, Supporters of Manston Airport

Just which group is being racist?

AS A former independent borough councillor during my elected time in office, the question of political correctness came up several times both formally and informally.

We now have the question of whether the group calling themselves White Lives Matter is a racist, white supremacists, semi-fascist organisation which has no place to be ever demonstrating in Margate? Norman Thomas, chairman of the

local Momentum Group, is like so many members of the far left very selective in throwing these type of comments around, while conveniently ignoring the deep seated anti-Jewish views of many of his members.

Why is Black Lives Matter any less racist than the White Lives Matter group?

We have on record very anti English comments from the present shadow home secretary Diane Abbott, not to mention the constant stream of anti English comments from Nicola Sturgeon, while her supporters parade around the streets of Edinburgh with the saltire; banners with offensive comments, mostly against the English.

The White Lives Matter group are probably not the most intelligent and literate men on the block, but as with the 17.4 million who voted Brexit, they are expressing some deep seated concerns that are either ignored, or conveniently swept under the carpet by the ruling political establishment, both at local level and national level.

Jack Woodford,
 via email

Show us proof of claims, John

JOHN R O'Neon [KoS letters, last week] appears to believe that the rise in violent crime levels is due to immigrants. Where is his proof?

Marika Sherwood,
 Oare

Cliff carriage is progressing well

REGARDING the extensive face-lift to the 1890 cliff carriage now being undertaken at Peene Railway Museum, near Folkestone, as previously mentioned [KoS, letters, 23.10], it's progressing extremely well.

Quality Canadian red cedar wood is being used to rebuild the exterior and the carpenter estimates the work will be completed around mid-December.

Brenda Smythe,
 Folkestone

Estuary airport lost in the fog

IF the people pushing for an airport in the Thames Estuary lived in or knew the area they would know that on most days from the end of October to the beginning of March, the estuary is under a blanket of fog or sea mist.

So much for 24/7 operations. Remember the Sheppey Crossing accident?

Derek Willis,
 Whitstable

KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles

Kent on Sunday will:

- 1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
- 2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
- 3) Be written in clear, concise English.

- 4) Not be overly sensational.
- 5) Have a sense of humour.
- 6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
- 7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
- 8) Highlight topical issues of concern to East

people living in the county.

9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.

10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.
kent-life.co.uk kentnews.co.uk



**Fireworks at
Leeds Castle**
by **Ernie Jordan, from
Margate**

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By Steve Loader
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IONIQ: A new age car anyone can buy and feel comfortable with.

Ironically, better than a Prius?

FIRST DRIVE: Hyundai has done it again: confounded the opposition with a thoroughly well-conceived and executed newcomer – this time, a classy hybrid

HYUNDAI'S choice of 'Ioniq' to name its new electric and hybrid car always begged being corrupted to 'ironic'. But the joke is on Hyundai's rivals; those who never expected this now perennial upstart Korean brand to show them how things should be done.

By that, I mean creating an alternative fuel car that doesn't require a complete change of faith from would-be owners.

For a start, the Ioniq is a new age motoring chameleon: the world's first car to be offered in hybrid (from £19,995), plug-in hybrid (expected spring 2017) and all-electric (from £24,495, including £5,000 Government grant) formats.

So, if you like the highly-specified Ioniq's general pitch, there is a powertrain to please everyone.

The car also benefits from a slippery five-door hatchback body with a 0.24 drag coefficient; better than most production cars and matching those green icons, the Toyota Prius and all-electric Tesla Model S.

And it is sufficiently futuristic to catch the eye, without looking ill-proportioned like its obvious rival the Prius – the world's most famous hybrid.

Even better, the Ioniq hybrid drives more conventionally than the Prius thanks to a six-speed twin-clutch automatic gearbox that



feels more 'real world' than the Toyota; in the latter, the driver feels detached from the car due to the continuously-variable auto transmission (CVT) and lifeless steering – though even the Ioniq suffers a little from the latter.

The combined powertrain's 139bhp (0-62mph in 10.8 seconds) makes the hybrid lively, while the chassis strikes a good balance

between taut for good handling and soft for better ride quality.

Look inside and the now expected Hyundai quality of trim and materials is also obvious, and thankfully devoid of Apple Computer inspired white trim that mars the Prius cabin.

In short, the Ioniq is a new age car that anyone can buy and feel comfortable with.

The growing allure of Peugeot's 308

Not an obvious Golf challenger on arrival, despite winning European Car of the Year 2014, but it grows on you and may prove a strong alternative, by **Steve Loader**

LIKE that chestnut "marry in haste, repent at leisure" attending a car launch can disguise faults that become all too obvious later.

And that was my fear when I bagged a Peugeot 308 for a week-long test back in 2014, after being impressed on my first brief encounter.

I needn't have worried and the car continues to appeal after another few days behind the 308's controversial small steering wheel; I've even grown to like that idiosyncrasy, a reminder of happy times at the wheel of the legendary 205GTi hot hatch.

And that's not so fanciful when the 308 tested here is in smart GT Line SW (estate) garb. This trim has replaced Feline, a label that never worked for Peugeot; it alluded to the brand's lion emblem, but it was too twee for male buyers.

GT Line, on the other hand, fits well. It's effectively GT trim with the choice of economy-led powertrains, in this case the award-winning three-cylinder 130bhp 1.2-litre petrol turbo.

And it doesn't feel out of place in a 308 dressed as a performance estate, even paired with the test car's six-speed auto 'box, as the engine revs well and surprisingly smoothly



for a three-pot motor – 0-62mph in 11.1 seconds.

Would-be buyers though will be more interested in the low emissions – 111g/km and £20/year road tax after year one, currently at least – and an official combined mpg of 56.5.

It also drives well: French brands

don't generally place such a high emphasis on ultimate handling, unless creating out and out performance models, because they recognise that comfort is at least 90 per cent of normal driving.

It's an attitude underlined by the 308, which can be pushed nicely on a winding road, but doesn't ever feel



unrefined – much of the credit here going to painstaking weight management in the car's construction.

Psychologically, the upmarket cabin helps too: Peugeot has steadily upgraded this area and the 308's is one of the best yet, the compact high quality steering wheel acting as

Peugeot 308 GT Line PureTech 130 Auto SW (estate)

Price:	from £24,315
Driving appeal:	★★★★
Image:	★★★★
Space:	★★★★
Value:	★★★★
Running costs:	★★★★
How green?:	★★★★
Best rival:	VW Golf

cheer leader for a minimalist and harmonious layout and finish.

My grumble – one that hasn't lessened with each 308 experience – is the routing of virtually everything through the touchscreen; when I want a quick demist or change of fan setting, I don't want to fiddle with a touchscreen.

I'm also not sure that doing away with a CD player is what everyone wants... yet. Of course, I hook up my phone or other USB devices, but I haven't dumped the CDs... yet.

Ultimately, while the 308 still doesn't threaten the VW Golf for out and out handling and quality, the GT Line option is eye-catching and helps the 308 stand out from some other humdrum rivals.

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Main dealers have raised their game

IT'S the next biggest purchase after our home, but we tend to be cavalier about car care.

Having servicing and repairs done on time and promptly are key areas of neglect and we sometimes don't worry much now about using a main dealer for maintenance, after 2002 EU legislation stopped carmakers insisting this was part of the car warranty.

Nevertheless, a full main dealer service history (FMDSH) is still a reassuring record that everything required for the manufacturer's warranty had been carried out.

That's a double benefit for the current owner: he/she feels it should optimise reliability and make the car easier to part exchange or sell privately later.

But sceptics argue that this perceived premium is wiped out by higher main dealer service bills. Maybe, but manufacturers and their dealer networks have raised their

game since the 2002 legislation.

Indeed, with car sales and profits squeezed, dealers have become more competitive on servicing, created cost-effective service plans, enhanced customer service, and specialised in ancillaries like tyres and exhausts – normally the preserve of the quick-fits.

They have also banked on the perception that only main dealer's service technicians can know a brand's cars as well they do, and will always use authentic parts.

Bookings can often be made centrally too, so that customers living between franchised dealers within the same group can pick the most convenient service slots available.

Loyalty schemes offering cheaper prices to owners of older and lower-value models have also thrived, persuading them against defection to the non-franchised sector because they feel their car is no longer worth top servicing prices.

And the franchises know that happy service customers keep coming back, seeing the latest new models in the car showroom – they may soon buy again.



KEEP UP THE HISTORY: the Peugeot 208, Nissan Qashqai and Skoda Yeti will all sell better second-hand with a good service history



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vRS (Fabia/Octavia) **£275**


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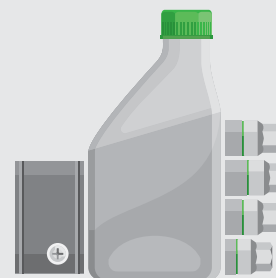
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Choose wisely for trouble free motoring

MODERN cars may be more reliable than ever before, but there's less that the DIY mechanic can do.

So, keeping the car reliable and safe is now best left to professionals and, of course, it costs.

Unfortunately, this also means that owners often ignore problems for too long and servicing is stretched beyond recommended parameters, risking the car's warranty and provenance when you come to sell. So:

- Get it serviced at the correct mileage or annually and have the servicing book stamped up, although motor brands are switching to centralised digital records.

- Check the warranty - beware

possible pitfalls that could endanger the guarantee.

- Act on recalls from the manufacturer for checks or replacements – it will help maintain the car's warranty and future saleability.

- Don't rely on the MOT certificate to assure the car's safety and reliability. Problems can arise at any time, so have them checked immediately.

- Check lights and tyres regularly for safety and legality. The latter must be at the correct pressures listed in the handbook or a sticker often placed on the driver's door frame. Legal tread depth is 1.6mm, but most motoring authorities advise replacement at 2mm, especially in winter.

- Keep oil, washer, coolant, power

steering, clutch and brake fluid levels topped up without over-filling, and make those checks on level ground. Don't wait for warning lights – it could be too late to prevent damage, or may compromise safety. Don't be caught out.

- There is little point in keeping the washer topped up if wiper blades are worn or split.

And if the windscreen is covered with bugs and grease, don't expect the washer and wipers to do the job for you – use a spray and elbow grease.

- Shop around for servicing. Even if you are committed to main dealer servicing, you don't have to use the one where you bought the car – some are better on pricing and customer service than others.



MODERN: Above from left, the Skoda Fabia, Alfa Romeo MiTo and Jeep Renegade, far right, the Fiat Tipo station wagon.



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Please note that CV's will not be considered.

The closing date for all applications is noon Friday 4th November 2016.

Interviews for this post will be held on 30th November 2016.

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Notice is hereby given that Highways England Company Limited intends to make an Order on the M2 Motorway in the County of Kent under Sections 14(1)(a) and 14(1)(c) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 because works are proposed to be executed on the road.

The effect of the Order would be to authorise the sequential overnight closure of:

- the coast-bound carriageway of the motorway between Junction 6 (A251) and Junction 7 (A2/A299);
- the slip road leading from the coast-bound carriageway of the motorway at Junction 4 (Gillingham Interchange) (A278);
- the slip road leading to the coast-bound carriageway of the motorway at Junction 6 (A251); and
- the slip road leading from the coast-bound carriageway of the motorway at Junction 7 (A2/A299).

These measures would be in the interests of road safety while contractors undertake lighting, electrical and signage works, road surfacing and all associated work, vegetation clearance, grass cutting, gully clearing, and litter picking.

The work is part of a larger A2/M2 project which is expected to last for approximately 13 weeks starting on or after Monday 28th November 2016. The overnight closures would take place between 20:00 and 05:00 (maximum period). Works would be phased to minimise the number of junctions affected at any one time. The estimated duration of each phase is 2 nights per closure.

The Order would come into force on 26 November 2016 and have a maximum duration of eighteen months.

Traffic affected by the closure in i) above would be diverted using M2 Junction 5 and return. Traffic affected by the closures in i), ii) and iv) above would be diverted via the A251 and A2.

The closures and diversion routes would be clearly indicated by traffic signs when they are in operation during the works period.

M Taylor, an Official of Highways England Co. Ltd.

Ref: HE/SE/2016/A2-M2/164

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Yarnold threatens to boycott Sochi

West Kingsdown star concerned over state-sponsored doping

Skeleton

By Mark Staniforth

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

OLYMPIC skeleton champion Lizzy Yarnold has threatened to boycott February's world championships in Sochi due to ongoing concerns over state-sponsored doping.

The West Kingsdown star criticised the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation (IBSF) for not doing more to address concerns over the awarding of the event to the Russian city, and said she will head into the new World Cup circuit unconvinced that her sport is clean.

Yarnold is preparing to embark on a new World Cup season later this month after taking a one-year sabbatical in the wake of her Olympic triumph in Sochi in 2014.

Russia's sliding programme was implicated in a report into doping improprieties earlier this year, and a second report scheduled for December is expected to reveal further breaches.

Yarnold said: "I hope the IBSF are going to have serious discussions about what they're going to do about the World Championships in Sochi.

"We know that it may be a state-sponsored doping issue and I don't want to compete at an event where there are not clean athletes and questions over what is going to happen to my doping samples.

"We need to find out more but if nothing changes ahead of the Sochi World Championships then I wouldn't rule out not competing."

The IBSF awarded the World Championships to Sochi in June 2013, a decision which pre-dated the



THREAT: Lizzy Yarnold won gold at the Winter Olympics in 2014

International Olympic Committee's announcement last year that preparations for the staging of future international winter sports events in Russia should be postponed pending the outcome of the McLaren investigation.

The IBSF, which was not immediately available for comment, has so

far shown no inclination to pursue an alternative venue and Yarnold added: "I am really surprised that the IBSF haven't taken a stronger stance.

"The IOC and World Anti-Doping Agency have recommended the championships aren't in Russia and that is something I would stand by and support."

Shakey signs up for two more years on track

Superbike

KENT'S British Superbike champion Shane 'Shakey' Byrne is eyeing 'the magnificent seven' after signing a two-year deal with the Paul Bird Motorsport team this week.

Byrne, who hails from Sheppey, continues to set the benchmark as the most successful rider in the championship's 20-year history, recently clinching a fifth title at Brands Hatch having also racked up 77 race victories and a further 96 podium finishes.

Byrne and team-owner Paul Bird have built success together over the past five years, claiming three championship crowns.

However, this landmark contract marks the first time that the two



BYRNE: Photo by Simon Hildrew

parties have cemented their continued partnership for more than just one additional season.

The veteran was pushed all the way on his road to glory at the

season finale in Longfield, in arguably one of his most challenging campaigns to date after the PBM team switched manufacturers to reunite with Ducati.

Byrne said: "The really strange thing for me is this is the first time that I have agreed a two year contract in BSB and I have a massive grin on my face.

"We have such a huge amount of mutual respect and we both know that we always give one hundred percent from both sides.

"I am so, so happy to have the opportunity to fight for another two titles; the fifth one was the groundwork, the foundations, and now I want to continue the success.

"I only ever want to line up on the grid to win races and fight for championships."

Sport Shorts

» Email sports@kosmedia.co.uk or call Tom Pyman on 01233 653477

Star striker departs as Gate exodus continues

MARGATE'S continued financial woes have resulted in the loss of star striker Elliott Buchanan.

The forward joined the Blues from Bishop's Cleeve in the summer, after finishing as top scorer in the National League South last season with 28 goals, including four against the Gate at the ProKit Stadium in March.

Boss Nikki Bull told us last week he expected an exodus of playing staff as he worked to balance the books, and Buchanan has also been joined out the door by Yado Mambo, Daniel Akintayin and Adam Cash, while Michael Thalassitis also recently departed Hartsdown Park.

Bull said the financial ramifications of an FA Cup exit last month would continue to be felt at the club "for weeks to come" after defeat to Harrow Borough robbed the club of a money-spinning clash with League One side Northampton Town.

The manager also admitted he is likely to have to play himself in goal because "you need to cut whatever costs you can".



BOSS: Nikki Bull



HOME: Gallagher Stadium

Boss 'disappointed' as midfielder joins rivals

MAIDSTONE United boss Jay Saunders admits he is "disappointed" after Joe Healy performed a last minute U-turn to leave the club and join their Kent rivals.

The midfielder had agreed to play for the Stones throughout the season, but told management at the Gallagher Stadium this week he had a change of heart and has instead opted to join

Chris Kinnear's Dover Athletic.

Saunders told the club's official website: "I am disappointed with Joe's decision, especially after I'd kept a place in the squad for him since June.

"This happens in football and we just have to move on."

Elsewhere, the Stones' clash with Dover on New Year's Day was selected for coverage by BT Sport.

Dallas defeated in comeback

CHATHAM heavyweight Tom Dallas' comeback fight did not go to plan as he suffered a devastating loss to Igor Mihaljevic in Maidstone last weekend.

Dallas, last seen on the undercard of Wladimir Klitschko fight in New York, dominated in the opening round working behind his jab well.

It wasn't long before the Croatian was floored by Dallas, who trains in

Sheerness, and was given a standing eight-count by referee Jeff Hinds.

But the 31-year-old was then caught with a left hook in his attempt to finish Mihaljevic and wobbled backwards. A barrage of hooks to the head with his feet unsteady was enough for Hinds to jump in and wave the fight off with just four seconds to go in the second-round.


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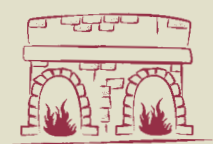
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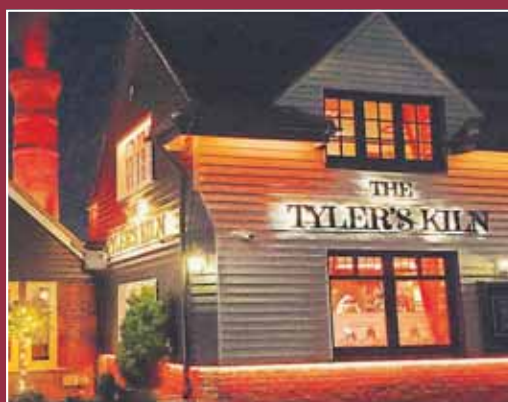
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